

^{y.}
**The Language and Narrative Technique
of Salman Rushdie's GRIMUS**

Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

ANJANA MEHTA

**CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI—110067**

1984

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

New Mehrauli Road : New Delhi-110067

Grams : JAYENU

Telephones : 652282

652114

CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

December 21, 1984

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
'THE LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF SALMAN
RUSHDIE'S GRIMUS' submitted by Anjana Mehta in
partial fulfilment of six credits out of total
requirements of twenty-four credits for the Degree
of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) of the University,
is her original work according to the best of my
knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for
evaluation.


H.C.NARANG
CHAIRMAN


S.K.SAREEN
SUPERVISOR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all those who helped me, in various ways 'to get on with it'. While it would be unfair to name only a few, it would be more unfair were I to omit some names. I am thankful to Dr Anvita Abbi and Dr Kapil Kapoor for their confidence in my ability to complete my work, especially when the going seemed rough. This boosted my self-confidence considerably. For helpful suggestions of a more practical sort, I am extremely grateful to Mr H.C. Narang. I would like to thank Brian McLaughlin for his useful suggestions about the 'setting' of Grimus. My special thanks go to my Supervisor, Mr S.K. Sareen who helped me at every stage in my work with his advice, patience and most of all his liberal-mindedness which allowed me to express my views even when, as sometimes happened, these views did not conform to his own. Such academic liberalism is ideally conducive to research. I would like to thank Ms Vijaya John of the British Council who helped me to locate material for my research work. Encouragement need not always be too positive to be effective and the occasional scepticism of Ms Meena Beliappa, Mr Ratnakar and Mr G.V. Prasad had the stimulus-like effect it was intended to have. They as much as anyone else helped me to meet the deadline.

Mr M.N. Talwar has helped to give tangible shape to my dissertation: I am grateful for his neatness and precision in typing a difficult manuscript.

ANJANA MEHTA

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"I have often wondered whether there is any Indian writer writing in English who does not at times feel a bit of a fake, as though going about with a false caste-mark, for he writes in a language not his own."

(Manohar Malgonkar)

"...the limitations we place upon the world are imposed by ourselves than the world."

(Grimus p.54)

"One never knows what universes may lie locked within one's mind."

(Grimus p.57)

How does one classify a writer who was born in Bombay, lived in India, migrated at a fairly tender age to Pakistan with his family, studied in an exclusive public school in England, obtained a degree in History at King's College Cambridge, worked for a multi-media theatre group and was by profession a copy-writer in an advertising firm when his first novel Grimus was published? The answer is perhaps as complex as the syntactic structure of the question. But then Salman Rushdie is not the sort of writer whose novels fit into neat, pre-fabricated classifications such as 'experimental', 'modernist', 'allegorical', 'historical' or even 'political'. Nor are matters simplified by labelling the novels 'Indian writing in English', 'Anglo-Pakistani writing', 'Commonwealth literature' or simply the work of an 'expatriate novelist' or 'writer-in-exile'. In fact, Rushdie is 'terrified' of the epithet 'Anglo-Pakistani' or 'Indo-Anglian' writer and firmly refuses to be classified thus. Clarifying his position he says:

"I like having India, I like having Pakistan and I like having England and I would like to have all three with me always." ¹

The settings of Rushdie's novels seem to confirm this triple allegiance. Though the setting of Grimus is not explicitly mentioned it seems very likely that the locale is probably the Welsh or Cornish Coast or even Manhattan Island off New York city, while Midnight's Children and Shame are both set in the sub-continent though the locale is predominantly Indian in the former and Pakistani in the latter. Before one attempts to place Salman Rushdie's novels as belonging to any particular tradition it would be more helpful if one could see the other side of the story: what Salman Rushdie's novels are not.

Even a relatively superficial comparison of Rushdie's novels with current and not-so-current Indian fiction in English shows that Salman Rushdie is not a regional Indian or Pakistani novelist writing in English, 'explaining' his country to the West in a language which though not 'standard' English always, is one which western - especially British and American readers are familiar with as are readers in many other countries - especially the Commonwealth countries where there is a revival of interest in India.

1. Interview, Herald (Karachi: June 1983).

A great deal of Indian writing in English is expert-oriented. This is quite understandable when one considers the fact that prices of 'good' (one hopes to be forgiven for using such a non-descript adjective) books in India are usually too high for the average reader of books written in English. This partly accounts for the high incidence of book-piracy. Moreover, even amongst those who do not buy novels written in English there is a marked preference for British or American best-sellers or thrillers.

Whatever be the economic rationale for this tendency, the fact remains that much of Indian fiction in English is projected towards an audience which is essentially non-native. Like guides taking foreign tourists on a conducted tour, many Indian novelists pander to the curiosity and gullibility of Western readers interested in the 'exotic' flavour of life in the Indian sub-continent. The recent revival of interest in the 'Raj' and the current splurge of 'Raj' literature and cinema, together with the success of religious and often pseudo-religious movements - the 'Hare Rama' cult for instance - has further contributed towards making not only Indian fiction in English but also Indian history (Richard Attenborough's Gandhi for instance) more popular both at home and abroad. Understandably, therefore, novelists

have tried to cash in on the Indian scene.

However, the phenomenon is not new and Indian novelists from Raja Rao to Bhabani Bhattacharya have been trying to explain and project India to Western readers. A look at some of the more recent publications of contemporary Indian novelists writing in English - extracts from which follow - reveal this export-India tendency which is too apparent to be missed:

"Vishnu Narayan shook his head in stern disagreement. "Life non-life...empty words. False, tiresome. Our guru has one great resource - Mahaprabhu Chaitanya, whose blood flows in his veins." He gazed again at Bhaktivedanta, ponderous in the heavy gilt frame, and eyes shining he sprang to his feet. Arms raised in the charade of ecstasy, he started to dance in set gyrations while he chanted raptly, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare."²

A little later in the same novel the author describes a scene of exorcism witnessed by a visiting American. After explaining the ritual whereby the village medicine man-cum-sorcerer frees his 'patients' from the clutches of the 'bhootni'; Bhabani Bhattacharya gives a fairly detailed account - charged with lewd eroticism - of the actual process:

2. Bhabani Bhattacharya, Dream in Hawaii, p.74.

"The young woman squatting on the ground was a pathetic sight. Her sari was sopping wet, so that all her body was revealed - she was well-shaped. The Ojha chanting gibberish in his harsh, cracked voice, went on emptying bucketfuls of water drawn from the temple well. 'Hee-hee!' she moaned, and her teeth went click-click-click - this was a cold mid-winter day. Hanuman Ojha, not heeding went on with his gibberish, voice rising off and on to a commanding shout. Once in a while the young woman's face twisted into a leer and she spoke filthy words which Chandran translated with much relish. And all this while, like background music in a movie, the crowd kept up its chanting of the holy name, Ram-Ram Ram-Ram."

In a passage describing Amina Sinai's visit to a fortune-teller in the old, walled city of Delhi, Salman Rushdie, like Bhabani Bhattacharya is portraying the Indian obsession with, even reverence for, the supernatural. The awestricken Amina in Midnight's Children is as gullible as the 'possessed' woman and the sadistic spectators in Dream in Hawaii:

"Cousins - one to four - gathering in the doorway through which the dark lady has passed, drawn like moths to the candle of her screech...watching her quietly as she advanced, guided by Lifafa Das, towards the unlikely soothsayer were bone-setter, cobra-walla, and monkey man. Whispers of encouragement now (and were there also giggles behind rough hands?): O such a too fine fortune he will tell, Sahiba!" and 'Come cousinji, lady is waiting!'... But what was this Ram Ram? A huckster, a two-chip palmist, giver of cute forecasts to silly woman, or the genuine article, the holder of the keys? And Lifafa Das: did he see, in my mother, a woman who could be satisfied with a two-rupee fake,

or did he see deeper, into the underground heart of her weakness?... but... I must describe, as nearly as possible despite this filmi curtain of ambiguities, what actually happened: I must describe my mother, her palm slanted outwards towards the advancing palmist, her eyes wide and unblinking as a pomfret's and the cousins (giggling?), "What a reading you are coming to get, Sahiba!" and, "Tell, cousinji, tell!"... did he begin like a cheap circus tent-man and go through the banal conjugations of life-line heart-line and children who would be multi-millionaires, while cousins cheered, "Wah wah!" and, "Absolute master reading, yara!" - and then did he change? -did Ram Ram become stiff - eyes rolling upwards until they were white as eggs... And now real fear among snake-charmer mongoose-dancer bone-setter and peep-show-wallah because they have never heard Ramram like this, as he continues sing song, high-pitched: 'There will be two heads - but you shall see only one... sisters will weep, cobras will creep...' Ramram circling faster... inexorably whirling egg-eyed around her statue-still presence..." 3

Making due allowance for the essentially different style, tone and theme of the two novels, it is the difference in attitude which is perhaps most striking. Salman Rushdie's treatment of the superstition-prone Indian lacks the cynical contempt of the author of Dream in Hawaii, the disdain of a writer trying to apologize for, while at the same time absolving himself from, the apparently disgraceful backwardness of rural India. Of course, Rushdie's language heightens the impact of the credulousness of the average Indian... the high frequency of

3. Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children, p.86.

questions, the incomplete sentences, the sudden changes in tense, the recurring interpolations and the involuntary ejaculations of amazement and approval of the palmist's cousins. But most of all one is conscious of Rushdie's involvement with India, its predilections, its mentality and its love of spectacle, even though it is obvious that Rushdie is in some respects the eternal 'outsider'.

Being an outsider is not necessarily a disadvantage for a novelist. Forster's A Passage to India owes much of its appeal - an appeal which has not diminished with time - to the fact that Forster, for all his involvement with India, was as far as India is concerned an 'outsider'. Rushdie has at least the sense of perspective which a certain amount of detachment gives to a novelist. However, this sense of detachment is counter-balanced with a concern for and a commitment to India which far surpasses Forster's, and of course for every obvious reasons. I have no intention of comparing Salman Rushdie with E.M. Forster. It would be, to say the least, most inappropriate. In fact it is difficult, if not impossible, to compare Rushdie with any other novelist, living or dead, without being conscious of the futility of the task. /Rushdie is a literary phenomenon in his own right and if he has been influenced by other writers, philosophers and even linguists, one can only say in his

defence that no great writer - whether novelist, poet or dramatist or even essayist or journalist - is or has been free from influence. In fact, one is tempted to say that any piece of writing, especially fiction, is greatly enriched by the variety and complexities of the influences of other writers on the author. No writer lives or writes in a vacuum, be it physical or literary. And it is much to Rushdie's credit that if one reader finds Midnight's Children heavily influenced by A Hundred Years of Solitude or Tin Drum; another finds Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man to be a more likely source of inspiration with Fielding's Tom Jones coming a close second and Sterne's Tristram Shandy hovering in the sidelines like a diligent prompter. In fact, it is this particular chameleon-like quality which not only accounts for the appeal of Salman Rushdie's novels - there is something in them for everyone - but also for the impossibility of identifying unequivocally, his literary antecedents. ✓

In the opening lines of Chapter six of Grimus - 'Voyages' - Rushdie could well be describing himself rather than Flapping Eagle with ruthlessly critical self-assessment:

"He was the leopard who changed his spots, he was the worm that turned. He was the shifting sands and the ebbing tide. He was moody as the sky, circular as the seasons,

nameless as glass. He was Chamelon, changeling, all things to all men and nothing to any man." 4

Flapping Eagle too is aware that he has forsaken 'the language of his ancestors for the languages of the archipeligos of the world' (p.33) and that he has 'a tendency to adopt the speaking style and speech patterns of others.'⁵

In some respects Salman Rushdie has a lot in common with Ruth Praver Jhabvala - both have a kind of love-hate relationship with India but whereas Rushdie's concern and involvement with India and Pakistan is so evident, Jhabvala is becoming increasingly disenchanted with India and Indians. The scorn is evident even in one of her early short stories 'A Spiritual Call' (1968).

"Swamiji had a very simple and beautiful message to the world. It was only this: meditate; look into yourself and so, by looking, cleanse yourself; harmony and happiness will inevitably follow. This philosophy, simple as its and product appeared to be, he had forged after many many solitary years of thought and penance in some icy Himalayan retreat. Now he had come down into the world of men to deliver his message, planning to return to his mountain solitude as soon as his task here was achieved. It might, however, take longer than he had reckoned on... Certainly it was evident that the world

4. Grimus, p.32.

5. op.cit. p.33.

urgently needed his message, especially the Western world... Hence his frequent travels to England and other countries, and next he was planning a big trip to America, to California, where a group of would-be disciples eagerly awaited him." (p.96)

It would be superfluous to add that in other respects Rushdie and Jhabvala are very different,

It is George Orwell, essayist, journalist and novelist, and significantly, the author of Nineteen Eighty Four who seems to have influenced Salman Rushdie's attitudes, writing and ideology (even if only to the extent that it provokes strong reactions) to a considerable extent. In an article ⁶ he has described Orwell as 'truthful, direct, intelligent, passionate and sane'. Coming from Rushdie who never hesitates to call a spade a spade, or in his own words, "to name rubbish as rubbish"⁷ and proceeds in the same article to identify and attack a lot of 'rubbish', five consecutive complimentary adjectives is tribute indeed. It is interesting to compare the uncompromising finality of both writers' opinions. In a review Orwell writes:

Your first impression is one of overpowering vulgarity. This is quite apart from the ever-present obscenity, and apart also from the hideousness of the colours." ⁸

6. Gentleman (Bombay: May 1984).

7. ibid.

8. "The Art of Donald McGill" in Horizon, Sept. 1941; quoted in The Collected Essays and Letters of George Orwell (eds.) Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol.II (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), p.156.

Rushdie too does not make any attempt to sugar-coat his criticism:

"Now of course The Far Pavillions is the purest bilge. The great processing machines of TV soap opera have taken the somewhat fibrous garbage of the M.M. Kaye book and pureed it into easy-swallow, no-chewing-necessary drivel." 9

Many readers are inclined to approach Rushdie's novels with a mixture of suspicion and awe, suspicion because there are no stock responses to his works which help the reader to safely measure their personal reactions against. They are not sure whether Rushdie is just a seven days wonder, a literary phenomenon today and a literary nonentity, perhaps, tomorrow. This suspicion is based largely on the conviction that 'literary' books are serious, high-brow stuff, not to be taken lightly or enjoyed but something to be borne stolidly. Boring, in other words, Best-sellers, on the other hand, are meant for sheer enjoyment, the critical faculty can be safely dispensed with. There is perhaps some basis for this generalization. Books like Ulysees or The Pilgrim's Progress aren't the ideal choice of reading material for a train journey. But neither profundity nor seriousness of purpose necessarily means dullness. Some of the most serious fiction is also

9. Gentleman, May 1984, p.62.

the most comic. Dickens' novels, for all their comic appeal, have a seriousness of commitment which is apparent despite the often frivolous tone of the novels. The humour in Fielding's novels or Jane Austen's does not put them in the category of non-serious literature. The effect of comic action is exposure--whether of the individual or of society in general, whereas the tendency of tragic action is one of revelation either of the self or of society vis-a-vis the self. In Midnight's Children despite Rushdie's self-conscious restraint ('No time to pause now, no time for sympathy or panic;') Adam Aziz can be seen as the ancestor not only of the hero Saleem Sinai, but is also the archetypal outsider in Rushdie's fictional world, the foreign-trained Indian who returns only to become a misfit and a visionary who is looked on with contempt, if not open ridicule in his own social circle. He is portrayed with a sensitivity of feeling which approaches the tragic:

"I saw the cracks in his eyes - a delicate tracery of colourless lines against the blue; I saw a network of fissures spreading beneath his leathery skin... Before the end of the forty-day mourning period, my grandfather's skin had begun to split and flake and peel; he could hardly open his mouth to eat because of the cuts in the corners of his lips; and his teeth began to drop like flitted flies. But a crack-death can be slow; and it was a long time before we knew about the other cracks, about the disease which was nibbling at his bones..." 10

In a novelist with a lesser command over his craft and feelings, the disintegration of Adam Aziz might have become merely pathetic.

Rushdie's novels are also looked up to in admiration and awe, and reviewers tend to use superlatives when assessing the author or his works:

"Rushdie is probably the most brilliant chronicler of our times and our parts of the world. He is also one of Britain's most important contemporary novelists." ¹¹

or

"Everyone is by now familiar with the Rushdie biography... the Rushdie story has become even more public; the lionising after the Booker." ¹²

Undoubtedly, much of the current esteem Salman Rushdie is held in India owes much to the fact that Rushdie insists on making himself heard:

"I am recommending the ancient tradition of making as big a fuss as noisy a complaint about the world as is humanly possible!" ¹³

His proclivity for polemics together with his unconventional attitudes towards not only the craft of fiction but also the purpose of fiction (and he strongly

11. Malvika Sanghvi, The Illustrated Weekly of India (Bombay: March 25), p.20.

12. *ibid.*

13. "Whitewashing the Raj", Gentleman, May 1984.

believes that fiction should have a purpose)¹⁴.

In the present study I have not attempted a comprehensive survey of Salman Rushdie's work or a formal assessment of his achievement as a novelist. It has been my purpose to trace important trends in his technique of narration and the language which propels and breathes life into that narration. The focus necessarily will be on his first, comparatively little known novel, Grimus. In the process of investigation of his procedures as an artist, it will often be useful and relevant to refer to his later novels, novels which steal the limelight, no doubt, but, as I will attempt to show, it is his first novel which is artistically the most satisfying and more 'finished' as far as structure and language are concerned. However, I would like to add that I have set out to explore, not to prove or disprove any of the assertions that have been made or are being made about him. Such general conclusions about his art, which have attracted my attention will be found briefly stated in the last pages. Here I will only say that it seems to me that

14. "I must make one thing plain. I am not saying that all literature must now be of this protesting, noisy type... What I am saying is that politics and literature, like sport and politics, do mix, are inextricably mixed, and that the mixture has consequences... there is genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world."

Salman Rushdie has come to stay. His novels are manifestations of rich and complex art, and one that continues to develop.

This, then, is not a critical enquiry in the strictest sense of the term. My attempt has been to elucidate Grimus often without pausing to assess its merits. I am concerned specifically with its technique of narration and its language. I feel that it is these two aspects of his art which it is chiefly necessary to probe before this vital, vociferous, volatile, imperfect, brilliant writer can be seen in his true shape. As to the very pertinent question of whether Rushdie's novels belong to the tradition of the English novel or to the somewhat dubious tradition of Indian fiction in English, one can only say that before one attempts to answer this question it is essential to have a deeper and more exact knowledge of what he has written. Opinion has often been based upon too narrow a selection of his work, and sometimes upon too superficial a reading of it. It is not opinions that so much concern me here as the novel itself and my responses, as a reader to the novel.

I have worked consistently within the novel with support from interviews given and articles written by Rushdie. Due to the limitations of my work, I have relied comparatively little on such interviews and articles.

Very rarely have I taken recourse to critical assessments of him. This is not merely a matter of expediency but also of principle. Though my adherence to any of the modes of literary criticism might best be described as eclectic, I don't hesitate to admit that it is the reader-response approach which to me seems most appropriate for Rushdie's novels. One of the advantages of the reader-response approach is that it allows the reader who gave up reading Midnight's Children on a long train journey because she found the hero excessively obsessed with his nose to feel no pangs of self-reproach for doing so. The reader who found Midnight's Children superb because it shows how useless Indian locks are ("It had been locked from the outside but only with an Indian-made lock, so it had been easy to force..." p.62) can find similar justification for his verdict. So can the reader who found Grimus a frightening novel - 'you never know when the chap is speaking: there are no inverted commas'. Salman Rushdie's novels are nothing if not multi-faceted. Like a mirror held up to nature - a mirror itself which consists of elaborate mirror-work. Each reader sees something different in them and the same reader sees something new which attracts the attention in every subsequent reading.

Chapter II

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO FICTION

"The best imaginative literature at any time represents, as perhaps nothing else can, the growing points of its age. In the literature of an age its conflicts tendencies, obsessions are uncovered and made manifest, to a degree which is continually astonishing... But since we are living in the present, immersed in it, it is exceedingly likely that we do not recognize its real nature, any more than we can see ourselves except in a mirror. Contemporary novels are the mirror of the age, but a very special kind of mirror, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous system, the coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it."

(Walter Allen Reading a Novel)

"...if anything can happen, we'd better make damn sure it never does"

(Grimus p.103)

Before one attempts to abstract from the narrative the various narrative devices that Salman Rushdie has exploited, it would be relevant to identify explicitly some of the features of literature, in general, but the novel, in particular, which need to be highlighted. Douglas Jefferson Graham Martin and Dipak Nandy¹ have identified three essential aspects that literary criticism must attend to:

"The first is that a literary work is relatively closed. It creates a world which insists on being taken on its own terms, and when those terms are violated by inappropriate questions the result is a palpable sense of absurdity."

Questions such as 'How many children did Lady Macbeth have?' or 'What is the name of the heroine of Daphne DuMaurier's Rebecca?' are not only irrelevant but also unethical. If Rushdie's hero, Flapping Eagle is more than seven hundred years old (though he looks in his mid-thirties), we have to accept it without demur.

1. Introduction, The Uses of Fiction, Essays on the Modern Novel in Honour of Arnold Kettle (eds.), Douglas Jefferson and Graham Martin (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1982), p.3.

The second point that must be remembered, stress Jefferson et al is that the closure (the closed world of the novel) is only relative:

"A work of Art is a product of time and place, and our first apprehension of it is in terms of its period. There are a few points at which the relatively closed world of the novel opens out to admit evidence from outside its own covers. The art of the critic requires the tact and sense of relevance to be able to judge where this evidence lies and how much of it is admissible." ²

Ideally, works of literature should be considered products of the imagination, the author's cultural environment - which, however, do not have an existence independent of the text which the author has provided - and the response of the reader who re-creates the text through his reading.

However, the third aspect that Jefferson et al enumerate is that great novels are not only products of their time:

"Their essential feature, which needs remarking on afresh for each generation, is their capacity to communicate across gulfs of time space and culture." ³

2. *ibid.*, p.3.

3. *ibid.*, p.3.

In this respect, though time will certainly be a deciding factor, Rushdie's novels do have the capacity to 'communicate across gulfs of space and culture'. His novels have been translated into several languages and appeal to the readers in Commonwealth as well as third world countries apart from Western readers.

It can be argued that Rushdie's novels depend for their appeal on an awareness of the historical and political context in which they were conceived. If one does not relate Raza Hyder in Shame to his real life counterpart or connect the Sabarmati murder case in Midnight's Children to the Nanavati scandal which hit Bombay more than two decades ago, then one misses much of the immediate, topical aspects of the novel. But those readers or critics who insist on seeing Shame as a fictionalized version of the Zia-Bhutto relationship - merely as an exercise in yellow-journalism - such readers miss much of the aesthetic value of the novels. Much the same could be said of Midnight's Children which aroused a lot of interest because of its strong political overtones and the libel suit these overtones generated. Perhaps Rushdie realized the consequences of such highly politically charged writing. In an interview he says:

"I thought if Shame and Midnight's Children were going to have any value beyond an immediate one, they had to somehow transcend the material and not to be only about the



DISS
O, III, 3, N47, 3:2
M4

TH-1596

detail of the moment. Because if it is only about the moment, it's not about much. When the moment passes, the book also passes." 4

Walter Benjamin has expressed this peculiar predicament of the writer and the critic's response to such writing. Summarizing Benjamin's views, Charles Rosen formulates the central concern of effective criticism:

"...the significance of the work is not exhausted by the meaning given to it by the author and his contemporaries, and is often not even adequately realized by them. The work is 'timeless' in that it is not limited to the moment of its appearance. It transcends history, but its transcendence is only revealed by its projection through history... the work detaches itself from the life that produced it and from the specific cultural milieu within which it was conceived; nevertheless it keeps a sense of that past life as an effect of distance from us. (Benjamin's) formulation of (his) task was to relate the work to history while respecting its essential function of stepping out of the historical time and space in which it was produced. The achievement of Benjamin was... to have developed a way of interpreting the historical significance of a work that does not question its supra-historical integrity."⁵

-
4. Gentleman, New Delhi, April 1984.
 5. Charles Rosen, "The Ruins of Walter Benjamin" and the "Origins of Walter Benjamin", The New York Review of Books, 27 October 1977, pp.33 and 35 and 10 November 1977, p.37 quoted in Douglas Jefferson and Graham Martin (eds.), The Uses of Fiction (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press), 1982, p.4.

Of even more relevance is Charles Rosen's account of Benjamin's doctrine of the autonomy of the work of art, and of the basically tentative nature of all literary criticism:

"It does not imply that a text does not refer outside itself, or, even more absurdly, that it is intelligible without a knowledge of the universe that surrounds it. It merely guarantees that no elucidation of the text--not even the author's own exegesis--can ever attach itself permanently to it or pretend to be an integral or necessary condition of experiencing it... No critical theory whatever has a valid and lasting claim upon the work. This autonomy requires that one return to the work itself, and that the interpretation is never in any way a substitute for it, or even, more modestly, its necessary accompaniment." 6

Rushdie is aware of the limitations of political interpretations of his novels:

Shame, unlike Midnight's Children, was almost entirely as a political novel - in fact, a little bit too much, because of this business of decoding it. There are certain obvious connections, but if the intention was to portray Zia and Bhutto it could have been done more effectively... I was interested in their archetypal and metaphorical content much more than in portraiture." 7

Rushdie does not believe that textual analysis is sufficient in itself for a full appreciation of his novels:

6. *ibid.*, p.4.

7. Interview with Kumkum Sangari, The Book Review, New Delhi, March-April 1984, p.250.

"Of course there are useful things about textual analysis - about how the text exists in the world, in society, about fictiveness and play and the nature of reality - but it's not an ideology of fiction to which I subscribe. Because I do think books are about the world."⁸

Yet when the 'world' of the books is related to the 'world' Rushdie is trying to depict - or rather expose - Rushdie is understandably nettled:

"People keep telling me that Benazir is supposed to be the Virgin Ironpants... Certainly Rani Harappa bears no resemblance to Mrs Bhutto nor Bilquees Hyder to Begum Zia etc. So if you try to decode the book like that it doesn't work and you just get into a mess."⁹

Explaining the predicament of the novelist whose work has an immediate social and political relevance, Rushdie justifies his attitude towards such attempts to see a one-to-one correspondence between the world of the novel and the 'world' it is trying to portray:

"It is quite understood that when a writer creates a fictional character, he frequently uses pieces of people he knows, makes them up and glues them together. When you go through the same process using public figures everyone knows, instead of private ones, people get puzzled, whereas all you have actually done is exactly what a novelist always does."¹⁰

8. *ibid.*, p.250.

9. *ibid.*, p.251.

10. *ibid.*, p.251.

It seems as if Rushdie wants to eat his cake and have it: he wants his novels to be seen in their proper political perspective is narrow and restricting, even distorting. In other words, he is in fact taking up a position vis-a-vis the work of art, which is similar to Walter Benjamin's.

Arnold Kettle, in the Introduction to the English Novel confronts a similar situation in trying to explain the 'trans-historical vitality' of Richardson's Clarissa. He concludes that:

"...We shall not enjoy Clarissa unless we approach it sympathetically, through history. But if we approach it only through history we shall not enjoy it either. The past and the present are at once different and inseparable. It is precisely because he stumbled on one of the real, contemporary dilemmas of his own time that Richardson achieved¹¹ an art which has relevance to ours."

What Kettle says about Clarissa could be applied with equal validity to Salman Rushdie's novels. Of course, this does not imply that there is any similarity between Richardson's novels and Rushdie's. But it does imply that both novelists suffer if their works are seen merely as products of their time and place in history.

11. Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (London: Hutchinson, 1951), vol.I, pp.70-71, quoted in The Uses of Fiction (eds.) Douglas Jefferson and Graham Martin (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1982), p.5.

Needless to say, any estimate of a modern novel is valueless unless it is based on knowledge of the great works of the past. Grimus cannot be viewed in isolation: it is autonomous as a text but it is very much part of a tradition - the tradition of the novel whether Indian or English - and any attempt to de-contextualize it, is to that extent, an attempt also to pull it out by its roots and examine it as if it were a laboratory specimen being viewed under a microscope. But at the same time our estimate of the great works of the past are always being altered, however, slightly, in the light of the novels of the present:

"...in fact, all literature, both of the past and of today, exists as it were in an eternal present. We speak of the tradition of the novel, but tradition is not a dead thing..."¹²

Walter Allen rightly stresses the fact that 'no book is an island unto itself' (to paraphrase John Donne). Every new novel - and Grimus is no exception - which is good and not merely a repetition of a novel of the past, not only exists in a tradition but it also modifies the tradition. There may be dissension among reviewers, even scepticism about Grimus. What is true is

12. Walter Allen, Reading a Novel (London: J.M. Dent, rpt. 1968), p.15.

that it cannot be adequately judged until it is seen in its proper perspective which was scarcely possible at the time it was written (1975). This accounts for Grimus being the comparatively lesser known and much neglected first novel of a well-known writer.

Of course, judgements are not absolute. In judging a novel which is new, vital and of considerable literary merit (as I hope to show) judgements can only be tentative.

Stanley Fish's 'affective stylistics' with its reader-response orientation to literary criticism is, I feel, most suited to a novel like Grimus which according to the blurb on the back cover (Panther Books, 1977) is 'an epic fantasy of vaulting imagination full of strangely echoing mysteries and extraordinary adventure'. A 'fantasy' needs the active, imaginative cooperation of the reader. Reader-response criticism focuses on readers during the process of reading, on the relation of the text to the reader. In fact it is assumed that it is impossible to separate perceiver from perceived, subject from object. The text's autonomy, its absolute separateness, gives way to its dependence on the reader's re-creation of the text and his/her participation. Perception, viewed as interpretive reading is not the discovery of meaning but the creation of it. Examination of the text in-and-of itself is replaced with discussion of the reading

process, the 'interaction' of reader and text.¹³

Fish's method is descriptive:

"In my method of analysis, the temporal flow is monitored and structured by everything the reader brings with him, by his competence; and it is by taking these into account as they interact with temporal left-to-right reception of the verbal string that I am able to chart and project the developing response."¹⁴

And the developing response was that of the 'informed reader', a reader with the ability to understand the text and have the experience the author intended.

I am aware that, in attempting to analyse the techniques that Salman Rushdie employs as means of controlling his reader, I have arbitrarily isolated narrative technique from all the social and psychological forces that affect his writing and readers. For the most part I have had to rule out different demands made by different audience in different places and times. Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction has expressed a similar concern rather more eloquently:

13. Stanley Fish's essay "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" 1970, presents an influential version of reader-response criticism. Fish viewed a sentence in the text, not as "an object, a thing in itself but an event, something that happens to and with the participation of the reader". "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics (1970) rpt. in Fish's Is There a Text in This Class? : The Authority of Interpretive Communities (Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press, 1980), p.25.

14. *ibid.*

"My subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers - the rhetorical resources available to the writer of epic, novel, or short story as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world on the reader." 15'

The reader-response does have inherent weaknesses:

"The critic has the responsibility of becoming not one but a number of informed readers, each of whom will be identified by a matrix of political, cultural and literary determinants. The informed reader of Milton will not be the informed reader of Whitman, although the latter will necessarily comprehend the former." 16

Wolfgang Iser's attitude towards the reader-text relationship seems to be both more practical and more inclusive:

The reader discovers the meaning of the text, taking negation as his starting point; he discovers a new reality through a fiction which, at least in part, is different from the world he himself is used to; and he discovers the deficiencies inherent in prevalent norms and in his own restricted behaviour." 17

-
15. Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), Preface quoted in David Morse, "Author-Reader-Language" in The Theory of Reading (ed.) Frank Gloversmith, (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), p.75.
 16. Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? (Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.49.
 17. Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.xiii quoted in David Morse 'Author-Reader-Language' in The Theory of Reading (ed.) Frank Gloversmith. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), p.77.

As I have already said, my approach to modes of literary criticism is nothing if not eclectic. Deconstructive criticism, however, narrow and dogmatic its premises has something tangible to offer. To deconstruct a text is not to search for its 'meaning', but:

"to follow the paths by which writing both sets up and transgresses its own terms, producing instead an asenantic 'drift' (derive) of Difference." 18

Ronald Barthes' description gives the basic conventions of deconstructive criticism:

"In the multiplicity of meaning everything is to be disentangled nothing deciphered; the structure can be followed, 'run' like the thread of a stocking at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning, ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning." 19

For a novel like Grimus, a deconstructive analysis would tend to concentrate on the properties of the writing per se. Or as Michael Riffaterre puts it 'texts are made

-
18. Robert Young (ed.) Untying the Text: A Post Structuralist Reader (Boston London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.18.
19. Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" in Image-Music-Text, essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p.147.

of words, not things or ideas.²⁰

Douglas Hewitt has perhaps the most sound, forthright, and reasonable, though certainly less formalized and conventional, attitude towards the interpretation of fiction:

"...all categories, all theories of fiction, all generalizations, if they are to be useful, must be recognized as being provisional and for convenience only." 21

If my approach seems more opportunist than liberal there are compelling reasons which could be offered as justification for my 'via media' stance. The first is that though Salman Rushdie has received both fame and recognition as a novelist, serious and detailed study of his novels has not yet been undertaken. Reviews of his novels, interviews with the author and brief articles - of these there has been a spate. But the focus of such writing has been the outspoken, volatile personality of the author and his equally outspoken views, on as widely differing subjects as Richard Attenborough's Gandhi,

20. Michael Riffaterre, "The Stylistic Approach to Literary History", in New Directions in Literary History, ed. Ralph Cohen (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p.147.

21. Douglas Hewitt, The Approach to Fiction: Good and readings of novels (London: Longman, 1972), p.4.

recent events in Assam, Mughal miniature painting, the architecture of Hindu temples, and bears to mention just a few.²²

The second reason for my choice of a more inclusive mode of literary criticism is that Grimus has received only retrospective attention and as such reviews of it tend to be coloured with the trite patronizing generalizations that are showered on 'rediscovered' novels. Familiar superlatives and slightly condescending approval are the usual reactions of reviewers who do not wish to

-
22. It is interesting to read Rushdie's refreshingly candid comments and replies to questions. One cannot but notice the almost complete lack of pretension and high-brow posture in Rushdie's opinions whether spoken or written. Here are a few representative quotes:

"True Indian actors were allowed to play villains (Saeed Jaffery, who has turned the Raj revival into a personal cottage industry, with parts in Gandhi and The Jewel in the Crown as well, did his hissing and hand rubbing party piece; and Sneha Gupta played the selfish princess, but her entire part consisted of the interminably repeated line, "Ram Ram"). ("Whitewashing the Raj" Gentleman (Bombay: May 1984).

"Well, I asked him about bears. I said what was it about bears, you know, and I said, you know, did he used to know bears well? (laughs) And he said no, actually he'd never really had a close relationship with a bear... (The Illustrated Weekly of India, Bombay: March 25, 1984; interview with Malavika Sanghvi)

...contd.

be caught on the wrong foot. No serious attempt to critically evaluate it has, to my knowledge, been undertaken. Even Rushdie is on the defensive when explaining the complete difference between Grimus and his two later novels:

"I've said before that I don't hear my voice in Grimus. The book did rather badly at the time, and after that I drafted another entire novel... The most important lesson I taught myself, by looking into why Grimus was a bad book, was that the fantasy was not connected to any observable reality, that these elements of fantasy must grow out of something I know and that people can recognize. That is instead of escape, it becomes a way of enabling readers to experience the world they're reading about more intensely than the world in which they live." 23

Making due allowance for the treatment of commercial non-success of a book as being due to its sub-standard quality, it is still surprising that Rushdie should lay the blame on the absence of connection between the 'fantasy' in Grimus and 'any observable reality' in 'the world in which they (the readers) live'. One might as well call Thomas More's Utopia and George

22. contd...

"It always matters to name rubbish as rubbish; to do otherwise is to legitimize it."
 ("Whitewashing teh Raj")

23. Interview with Kumkum Sangari, The Book Review, New Delhi, March-April 1984, p.253.

Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four 'escapist'. One can perhaps excuse Rushdie for his embarrassed rationalization, because a little later in the same interview he admits that the initial rejection of Grimus was 'very painful because it involved rejecting, more or less completely one's entire intellectual framework.'²⁴

Grimus as I hope to show is somewhat like the 'Ugly Duckling' which turns out to be a graceful swan. Whatever else might be put forward in favour of Midnight's Children and Shame there can be no denying the fact that Grimus is the most aesthetically pleasing of the three and has a structure which is more 'finished' and a narrative mode more sophisticated than the loose, generous, rambling, informal, autobiographical style of Midnight's Children or the widely disparate perspectives of Shame.

24. *ibid.*

Chapter III

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN GRIMUS

"...story telling...plays a major role in our sleeping and waking lives... we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative".

(Barbara Hardy in Towards a Poetic Fiction: An Approach Through Narrative)

"A story is always someone telling someone else that something happened."

(Barbara Herrnstein in 'Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories')

"All fiction for me is a kind of magic and trickery - a confidence trick, trying to make people believe something is true, that isn't. And the novelist in particular is trying to convince the reader that he is seeing society as a whole."

(Angus Wilson in The Wild Garden, Or Speaking of Writing)

"...I don't like it, said Elfrida. It's too pretty, too neat. I do not care for stories that are so, so tight. Stories should be like life, slightly frayed at the edges, full of loose ends and lives juxtaposed by accident rather than some grand design. Most of life has no meaning - so it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful. And for a story to distort life is nothing short of criminal, for it may then distort one's own view of life.

(Grimus, pp.149-150).

Aristotle taught us long ago that it is vain to seek for exact definitions of literary terms. Novels are what people agree to call novels. They are fiction, they are in prose, and they usually but not quite always, have a degree of realism which is unequalled by any other literary form. There is above all the desire to tell a story, which is older than literature itself. And it is Salman Rushdie the story-teller that this chapter is concerned with.

As the term suggests 'story-telling' has strong connotations of oral narrative and Rushdie's

novels have a distinctly oral flavour. Rushdie is intensely aware of the structure of oral narrative and his novels reflect the judicious use of techniques of oral narration:

"For a long time I have been interested in that (the structure of oral narrative). If you listen to anybody, your grandmother or a public storyteller telling stories, it is almost never beginning-middle-end. The story goes in loops--it repeats itself, goes back to an earlier point, adds a bit, comes back, then it digresses--then there's a story inside a story inside a story." 1

It is this 'in media res' technique which Rushdie employs for the opening of Grimus. The narrative plunges into the situation without any of the introductory manoeuvring which characterizes Rushdie's other novels:

"Mr. Virgil Jones, a man devoid of friends and with a tongue rather too large for his mouth, was fond of descending this cliff-path on Tuesday mornings." 1

(p.12)

1. Midnight's Children begins with a reversal of the once upon a time formula of stories:

...contd.

The rather prosaic, matter-of-fact beginning, innocuous as it seems, is a prelude to a quick succession of not so innocuous events. Yet the reader is led into accepting the attempt of the 'hero' to commit suicide in the second paragraph of the narrative as if it were as customary an act as Virgil Jones' weekly visits to the beach:

"Sometimes, people trying to commit suicide manage it in a manner that leaves them breathless with astonishment. Flapping Eagle, coming in fast now on the crest of a wave, was about to discover this fact. At present he was unconscious; he had just fallen through a hole in the sea."

(p.13)

Flapping Eagle's unceremonious entry into the narrative is matched by the manner in which the reader is filled in on his nature:

1. contd...

"I was born in Bombay...once upon a time."

Shame has a more traditional opening but once again there is a variation of the 'once upon a time' formulaic introduction which characterizes oral narrative.

"It should be pointed out that Flapping Eagle was averagely kind and good."

(p.13)

It is almost as if the reference to Flapping Eagle is an after-thought. Since he has come to the reader's notice it would not be irrelevant to say a few words about him! One of the central ironies of the novel is precisely this ambivalence and disparity in the attitude of the narrator towards the hero, the hero's attitude to his predicament and the reactions of the inhabitants of Calf island to the outsider:

"A remarkable fact about Flapping Eagle's arrival at Calf Island: the island-dwellers, who shouldn't have been too surprised at his arrival, found it highly disturbing, even unnerving. Whereas Flapping Eagle himself, once he acquired a certain piece of knowledge, rapidly came to accept his arrival as entirely unremarkable."

(p.15)

It is in a similarly casual manner that another incident which is of vital significance in the action of the novel is mentioned:

"It was also the day she met Mr. Sispy and was given eternal life."

(p.18)

An event of considerable symbolic significance - the hero's encounter with an eagle which leads to his adoption of the Amerindian brave's name Flapping Eagle - is dismissed as an anecdote:

"A curious thing happened on my way up to the tabletop. I saw an eagle..."

(p.21)

Recapitulating the day's highlights, the hero's reactions are in no way commensurate with the devastating significance of his experience. They are the reactions of a slightly dazed young man:

"So on one day, I was offered eternal life, broke the law of the Axona, took a brave's name from an omen and lost my virginity to my sister. It was enough to make a fellow believe there was something special about being twenty-one."

(p.22)

With incredible detachment almost unconcern
the narrator informs us:

"When Flapping Eagle arrived
at Calf Island his body was
thirty four years, three months
and four days old. He had
lived for a total of seven
hundred and seventy-seven
years, seven months and seven
days. By a swift calculation,
we see that he had stopped
ageing seven hundred and forty-
three years, four months and
three days ago."

And in the same breath, a trite comment:

"He was a tired man."

(p.38)

The peripheral stance of the narrator,
with a playing down of significant events is not
in relation to the hero only:

"The donkey was bellowing
because the Two-Time Kid,
Anthony St. Clair Peyrefitte
Hunter, was in the process of
sodomizing it, and even for a
docile donkey, there are limits."

(p.160)

When Virgil Jones, in an attempt to save
the life of the hero who is in a life-and-death
struggle against 'dimension fever', prepares for

the ritual 'dance' which alone might save Flapping Eagle, the narrative becomes surprisingly non-committal and distanced:

"Virgil Jones stood up. He removed his old dark jacket. And his old dark trousers. And his old dark waistcoat with the watchless gold chain. He removed his bowler from his head; and placed all these things, with his undergarments, neatly on Flapping Eagle's prone form, where they wouldn't get in the way. And ignoring his protesting corns, he danced.

(p.80)

This ironically neutral position of the narrator is evident throughout the novel. It is in keeping with the characteristic mode of understatement that Rushdie has employed in the novel. Rushdie has intentionally imbued the narrative with a matter-of-factness and understatement to give credibility to it. Were he to create a sense of awe in the reader - a hero who is more than seven hundred years old, an island cut off from the rest of the world, a megalomaniac remote-control ruler, a society of obsessed immortals is awe-inspiring in itself - it would only highlight the fantasy element in the novel; and it appears that Rushdie

is quite determined not to do that. However fantastic and other-worldly the plot might be, the narrative keeps its cool, as it were, treating death, murder, suicide, visits to other planets, 'dimensions', super-human beings, mysterious objects with magical power - all this and much more, with perfect equanimity, as if they were normal everyday occurrences and the reader is expected to accept them as such. Rushdie de-emphasises the extraordinary aspect of the plot. The anonymous reviewer, quoted on the back-cover of Grimus (Panther Books, rpt. 1984) who describes the novel as a 'mixture of SF and folk-tale' has perhaps over-stressed the element of science-fiction fantasy in the novel. Though Grimus does not fit into any classification of novel-types easily, it is certainly not science fiction (SF) that Grimus can be identified with. The plot in itself could perhaps be seen in the framework of SF but the narration constantly stresses the contrary. It would be just as futile to see Gulliver's Travels or The Tempest as science fiction.

The narrative method is flexible, centred in Flapping Eagle's own observations but shifting easily to other minds. Rushdie switches from the impersonal and coolly ironical, detached narration

which persists throughout the novel to first person in certain crucial passages thereby giving the reader an insight into the workings of the hero's subconscious:

"I was the boy. I was Joe-Sue, Axona Indian, orphan, named ambiguously at birth because my sex was uncertain until some time later, virgin, young brother of a wild female animal called Bird-Dog, who was scared of losing her beauty, which was ironic, for she was not beautiful. It was my (his) twenty-first birthday too, and I was about to become Flapping Eagle. And cease to be a few other people.

(I was Flapping Eagle.)"

(p.15)

As is evident from this passage, even when there is first person narration there is a frequent, unexpectedly sudden shift to third person narration. This heightens the sense of the hero's alienation from himself; it reinforces the impression of a split personality, even an identity crisis, in the Axona youth when he leaves the relatively sheltered and protected life of the tribe and visits the outside world:

"Flapping Eagle, alone in his tent, scrabbled furiously at the floor. Then he had

them: the yellow and the blue. At least, he thought, if I am to live in the Outside, I may as well give myself one advantage. He drained the life-giving fluid. It tasted bitter-sweet. He put the blue bottle in a pocket. I mentioned that life among the Axona prepared me in many ways for Calf Island. One of the ways was this: it taught Flapping Eagle the power of obsession."

(p.24)

Here, third person narration is followed by first person narration and then there is a reversion, for no apparent reason, to the third person. The result is greater sensitivity in the narration which like a thermometer registers the emotional temperature of the hero.

Another fictional technique used in the novel is the existence of many plots proceeding at the same time, very nearly independent of each other. Rushdie has employed this technique in his other novels too. He explains his attitude to writing:

"Basically, there are only two principles of writing. One is inclusion and the other is exclusion. The first is to separate one strand and look at it which is perfectly legitimate. But the other is to find

strategies to put in as much as you can." 2

Grimus is in many ways a picaresque novel, much in the Don Quixote tradition, but with certain obvious differences. Whereas Don Quixote is the lean visionary astride an equally lean horse and Sancho Panza is the wordly, pleasure loving companion, in Grimus Virgil Jones has some physical resemblance to Sancho Panza but he has been through the phase of the visionary with high ideals who becomes the subject of ridicule:

" - They treat me like an idiot here he said, because I went through a phase behaving like one..."

(p.203)

He is like Don Quixote who has retired to a life of passivity and self-imposed exile. It is Flapping Eagle who reawakens in him the long forgotten love of adventure and a latent sense of moral, social responsibility. Explaining his apprehension of the alternatives available to the two men in their

-
2. "Writing in the Oral Tradition", Interview with Shanta Gokhale, Express Magazine, New Delhi, March 4, 1984.

quest, he tells the bewildered hero:

"You can choose between withdrawal, inaction and action. No shame in any of them.

- I don't understand, said Flapping Eagle.

- Withdrawal involves walking out there and getting lynched. Not pleasant, Or...let events take their course...Leave it behind. Inaction involves staying put right here and waiting... Action however, does rather involve doing what I say.

- You chose inaction, said Flapping Eagle. You haven't done much recently.

- Naturally, said Virgil. I can't do anything. You can."

(p.204)

Flapping Eagle's entry into the town of K - after his initial rejection and unceremonious exit from the Elbaroom, is on a donkey:

"Half-leaning on her he made his way to where the donkey stood: after some more trouble they were both astride her, Mrs Gribb in front; and they moved off down the Cobble-way to the place which had haunted Flapping Eagle earlier in the evening: home.

Once he has been accepted in the social set-up in K Flapping Eagle sets out on an exploratory tour of his new home:

"The Gribbs' donkey, perhaps the most obedient, least mulish donkey that ever was, jogged demurely along the Cobble-way with a divided Flapping Eagle upon its back. He had spent most of the day exploring his new home, and his mind was filled with a struggle between his desire to get to the bottom of the contradictions and anomalies he had already found, and his desire to stay, uncomplaining in the bosom of his new circle of friends. The two it seemed were mutually exclusive."

(p.157)

Flapping Eagle combines the Sancho Panza view of life - an excessive preoccupation with the here-and-now of life - with a Quixote like susceptibility to illusions and the fairer sex:

"In the presence of the two pale ladies, his worries evaporated. He sat drinking the wine of K... half-dreaming as the two of them circled the room in a hypnotic, aimless promenade. The white witches weaving their spell, binding him in silken cords. They made K real for him..."

(p.156)

Unlike Quixote, Flapping Eagle is aware of his weaknesses, but helpless against them, nevertheless:

"It was the votary flame that produced the second illusion... But even when he deciphered the trick his eyes had played, Flapping Eagle found no relief;

partly because, now twice-bitten by illusion, he expected a third..."

(p.92)

But it is not only Flapping Eagle who has a hyper-active imagination:

"With sufficient imagination, Virgil Jones had found, one could create worlds, physical, external worlds, neither aspects of oneself nor a palimpsest-universe.

Fictions where a man could live.

In those days, Mr. Jones had been a highly imaginative man."

(p.79)

He is ever ready to help: even if it means risking his own life:

"Virgil Jones had gone to the rescue."

(p.81)

Flapping Eagle and Virgil Jones do keep up with the times, and when transport problems arise, they become "the proud possessors of two bicycles" (p.89) and "They mounted their anachronistic steeds and headed into its depths, towards the siren light." (p.89)

Just as Quixote's adversaries could be identified partially with an external reality, and partially with imaginary constructs of his fertile imagination, the 'dangers' that beset his modern counterparts are also the 'inner dimensions' and the 'outer dimensions':

"Lurking in the Inner Dimensions of every victim of the fever is his own particular set of monsters. His own devils burning in his own inner fires. His own worms gnawing at his strength."

(p.90)

The 'Outer Dimensions' are the unsettling effects of exposure to a totally different environment - a kind of severe cultural shock. There are innumerable references to 'contest', 'battle' and 'quest' and Virgil Jones and Flapping Eagle are the travellers on a journey - a journey into their own subconscious as much as a journey into the unknown:

"On their rickety bicycles, dressed in their forlorn garments, Flapping Eagle and Virgil Jones, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, rode to their tryst."

(p.91)

Grimus abounds in references, both covert and explicit to the Don-Quixote-Sancho Panza relationship

between Flapping Eagle and Virgil Jones (though the actual names are used only once).

George Orwell, a writer whom Rushdie evidently admires, calls Don Quixote and Sancho Panza stock figures of literature:

"The Don-Quixote-Sancho Panza combination, which of course is simply the ancient dualism of body and soul in fiction form, recurs more frequently in the literature of the last four hundred years than can be explained by mere imitation. It comes up, again and again, in endless variations, Jeeves and Wooster, Bloom and Dedalus, Holmes and Watson (the Holmes-Watson variant is an exceptionally subtle one, because the usual physical characteristics of two partners have been transposed). Evidently it corresponds to something enduring in our civilization, not in the sense that either character is to be found to be a 'pure' state in real life, but in the sense that the two principles, noble folly and base wisdom, exist side by side in nearly every human being. If you look into your own mind, which are you, Don Quixote or Sancho Panza? Almost certainly you are both. There is one part of you that wishes to be a hero or saint, but another part of you is a little fat man who sees very clearly the advantages of staying alive with a whole skin. He is your unofficial self, the voice of the belly protesting against the soul. His tastes lie towards safety,

soft beds, no work, pots of
 beer and women with voluptuous
 figures. He it is who punct-
 ures your fine attitudes...
 he is one of the stock figures
 of literature." 3

Much of the narrative is imbued with this
 quest motif. In fact the whole text can be read
 as the search of the hero not for adventure but for
 home, for a sense of belonging and for social accept-
 ance. He is a 'displaced person' who is 'always
 counterfeiting roots' moving 'from anywhere to no-
 where across the infinite sea'. (p.87) Flapping
 Eagle is 'haunted' by 'home':

"Home: that was the word that
 had done it. It crept into
 his head as he stood looking
 at the town from the breaking
 waves of the forest. It
 had come announced, filtering
 into him on a shaft of light
 from the distant windows.
 Home is the sailor, home from
 sea, and the hunter home from
 the hill. Flapping Eagle
 was coming home, to a town
 where he had never lived.
 He saw home in the mist
 lying softly over the fields;
 he scented it in the perfume-
 laden night; he felt it in
 the cobbles; but most of all
 it was the windows that were
 home...the closed windows."

(p.111)

3 "The Art of Donald McGill" in The Collected
 Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell,
 Vol.II; (eds.) Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus;
 (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), p.163.

Flapping Eagle is the 'pariah' - the un-touchable. 'Pariah. That word rose from his past to increase his discomfiture'. (p.112) He is weary of his endless travels and has vowed that he 'would abandon his search and make life here, if he could. So here was an end to centuries of wandering, a methuselah age of following blindly where the moving finger led.'" (p.107)

He is like the Ancient Mariner cursed and eternally wandering:

"...he was also the albatross. She clung round his neck and died, and the mariner became the albatross. Having little option, he survived, wheeling his craft from shore to unsung shore, earning his keep, filling the empty hours of the hollow days of the vacant years. Contentment without contents, achievement without goal, these were the paradoxes that swallowed him."

(p.32)

Rushdie's hero has too many irreconcilables yoked together for happiness in this world-flesh and spirit, passion and reason, instinct and intellect. The reader is meant to perceive the counter-point of different ways of looking at life - with scientific eyes, cultural eyes, sensual eyes and inner eyes which probe the subconscious. Rushdie sees something of

Flapping Eagle's peculiar condition in that these different lines of approach never come together - they always remain parallel. The philosophic interpretation of man is at variance with the scientific:

"Ignatius was saying:

- The one aspect of K
I love above all else is
the absence of scientists.
I have always found it shameful
that mere technologists
have arrogated to themselves
the right to be called that,
scientists, men of knowledge.
In their absence, science
is returned to its true
guardians; scholars, thinkers,
abstract theoreticians
like myself."

(p.138)

Rushdie uses different perspectives, different characters to comment upon the hero's predicament, his weaknesses and his charms. A Chinese whore whose analysis is particularly revealing explains:

"There are some men, said
Lee Fook, whose curse it is
to be different from the
rest. Among thinkers, they
see only a lack of practicality;
among men of action, they
mourn the absence of thought.
When they are at one extreme,
they yearn for the other side."

'Such men', she continues, 'are habitually alone, unloved by most others, incapable of making a friend, since to make a friend would be to accept the other's way of thinking.' (p.141) She uses the ancient symbol of 'yin' and 'yang' to explain to the self-absorbed hero the necessity of finding a complement to his self and thus to become a fulfilled person. It is ironic that when Flapping Eagle does meet his complement - Grimus - it is not a moment of self-fulfilment but of self-effacement and disintegration.

Grimus' tripartite structure - 'Times Present', 'Times Past' and 'Grimus' - corresponds roughly to three phases in the hero's existence. There is his 'uncivilized' tribal past, his confrontations with 'civilized' society and with Utopian society and finally a confrontation with his own future represented by Grimus who not only looks like an older version of him but whose thought processes and mentality eventually merge with the hero's. Grimus is as much an extrapolation of Flapping Eagle's self as the Axona youth who tries to kill him:

"The devotee, who had lain
silent while they spoke,
whirled round and cast off
his cloak. Again Flapping
Eagle's self-control received
a body-blow.

He was gazing into his
own eyes.

His own eyes but a vilely
altered representation of
himself...

And that voice: the unbroken,
high, eunuch's voice, a
travesty of his own."

(p.93)

Rushdie uses this 'surrogate' of the hero to demonstrate how the hero cannot easily renounce his past even though he is a 'traitor' to his 'race'. He can renounce his tribe but not his heritage. The confrontation with Grimus is not so easily resolved. The hero loses his sense of identity as well as the little control he had over his own life:

"Then all discussion, whether
rational or thought-formal
ceased and the I-Grimus within
me released upon I-Eagle the
full force of his indomitable
will."

(p.269)

The confrontation with Grimus is a confrontation
with his own future.

Grimus has much in common with the Utopian
novels especially Huxley's Brave New World and Orwell's
Nineteen Eighty Four. In Rushdie's past-present-
future world, time is as fluid as the sea and as
all-encompassing. There are no children. The static,

frozen, 'petrified', society does not need to perpetuate itself through reproduction: it is a society of immortals who have to pay a high price for their immortality:

"Obsessionalism, 'single-mindedness', the process of turning human beings into the petrified, Simplified Men of K, was a defence against the Effect, Virgil had said: concentrate on the forms of things, the material business of living, and on the 'prime interests' and the inner and outer universe would be blocked out."

Flapping Eagle leaves one type of communal living - tribal Axona society - to live in another sort of commune. What surprises him is that while Axona society had been 'born and bred to communal living', the society in K should have voluntarily opted for communal living. "It was extraordinary that so motely a collection as the K dwellers, so separate from each other, should find it possible to accept a similar form of commune with such apparent ease." It is a Utopia - or rather 'Dystopia' to use Anthony Burgess' term for a Utopia which turns sour - where old world concepts such as social status still exist:

"Could a man like Flann O'Toole, aggressive, competitive, ever agree with

the notion that he was worth no more and no less than any other member of the community? And though the Cherkassovs had acquired a nominal pre-eminence, the concept was surely alien to them as well." 4

(p.158)

'To dispense with rewards, to distribute the produce of K's fertile farmland according to need rather than rank or status or wealth' - that is the pattern of life in this dystopia. The whores are unpaid - 'They' did their work and in return were free to use the services of any other resident, and to collect generous rations 'from the Indian P.S. Moonshy'. The town 'provided services, the farm provided food, and the two were freely given and taken. In a sense it was Utopian; but how on earth had it become workable?' (p.158) The most surprising thing is that there is no crime or concept of immorality. And into this world comes a young man bred in the old uncivilized community who has had a taste of civilization yet remains essentially the outsider, the 'pariah'. The narrative reinforces the author's preoccupation with the obsessive quest of the hero and his desire for acceptance:

4. Anthony Burgess, 'Utopias and Dystopias' in The Novel Now (London: Faber, 1967), pp.40-43. Burgess writes: 'From Huxley on, the creators of dystopias were impelled not by a pure science-fiction desire to tickle the imagination but by a moral concern which needed the form of a fable rather than that of the psychological novel.' (p.43)

"Man's origins, Grimus was saying, are those of the hunter. Thus the hunt, search or quest is man's oldest, most time-honoured pursuit. You must feel a great sense of accomplishment to have arrived."

(p.244)

References to man in relation to history, historical perspective and the displacement caused by exile, these follow the hero like his own shadow throughout the narrative. Gribb the 'philosopher' scolds the hero for his perverse 'womb-obsession' with origins:

"-At times, Mr. Eagle you show a degree of perversity... as I just said, origins, beginnings, are valueless. Valueless. Study how we live, by all means. But leave, for goodness' sake this womb-obsession of yours, this inquiry into birth... Please excuse me now: I must collate a few more cliches before lunch. The donkey jogged along the Cobble-way."

(p.157)

This passage also illustrates a device frequently employed in the narrative - the narrator does not make any direct comment on the characters. Their words reveal, expose them and the comment is made

indirectly through the juxtaposition of material which is not directly related. For instance the importance the reader is supposed to attach to Gribb's views is effectively indicated by the sentence that immediately follows - 'The donkey jogged along...'

A sense of time standing still pervades the world depicted in the narrative. Dolores O' Toole with her determined clinging to the past - 'Nothing will change', 'it is yesterday... Every day is yesterday, so every day is fixed.' (pp.52, 53)

Virgil Jones wears a gold watch chain but 'there was no gold watch at the end of it'. (p.40) Time seems to have stopped for Virgil Jones and Dolores O' Toole as for the other inhabitants of Calf Island. Jones reminds Flapping Eagle of 'an old railway engine he had once seen, a giant of steam in its day, rusting in a siding... A stranded hulk'. (p.41) The hut in which Jones and Dolores live is 'the dwelling of a savage, or a castaway'. It is reminiscent of a novel like Robinson Crusoe.

In fact Grimus has certain obvious similarities to The Tempest as well as to Robinson Crusoe. Grimus can be seen as a modern day Prospero drawing

travellers to his island with magical powers, though Flapping Eagle's sister, who is under Grimus' hypnotic spell, is quite the reverse of the innocent, wonder-struck Miranda who had lived a very sheltered and protected life. There is the same basic story - up to a certain extent. A man from a different culture is cast away on an unknown island, frighteningly isolated, thrown on his own resources. But he not only develops power over nature and native, he also discovers and reveals a new dimension or re-conception of human beings. From this basis the works develop differently. But even behind these differences lies a certain similarity. They are 'mythic' in the sense that they seek to uncover, beneath the particular 'histories' of Prospero, Crusoe and Flapping Eagle an archetypal human condition and structure of creation. In Grimus it is not creation as such but re-creation and the final rejection of the attempt to play God:

"But I-Eagle had seen too much on Calf Island and outside it, seen too much of the way I-Grimus had ruined lives for the sake of an idea. To I-Grimus ideas, discoveries, learning, these were all-important. I-Eagle saw the centuries of wretched wandering that preceded my arrival..."

Grimus contains many literary allusions. The narrative is given a greater air of authority and the hero is connected, as are other characters, to their literary antecedents.

There are allusions to Shakespeare's plays:

"Now might I do it pat"

(Hamlet, p.61)

"A tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Dear Brutus, I wonder if he was right."

(Julius Caesar, p.220)

"Where the blade skids
there skid I"

(a re-wording of Ariel's song in The Tempest, p.91)

Ignatius Gribb talking to Flapping Eagle about Virgil Jones "'Hamlet's" disease he said. Doubt I mean. It got him killed.' (p.171)

Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' is quoted:

"A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw..."

(p.142)

Miss Havisham in Great Expectations seems to have inspired Rushdie in his depiction of Liv, living in the past, surrounded by undisturbed cobwebs and dust:

"This was how she lived her life, embalmed in the bitter formaldehyde of old hatreds and betrayals."

(p.233)

There is reference to the Simurg from Sufi poetry and the Phoenix:

"The Simurg... is the Great Bird."

(p.223)

"And one day... when you have done all you wished to do, been all you wishes to be, you can pass this supreme gift to another, choose the moment and manner of your going and give the Phoenix a new life, a new beginning."

(p.268)

Another narrative device that Rushdie exploits is the symbolic naming of characters.⁵

5. Joan Rockwell in Fact in Fiction: The Use of Literature in the Systematic Study of Society (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) comments on the significance of the choice of proper names in fiction:

The names are ironic, exposing the woefully inapt comparison between the character in the novel and the original. Virgil Jones has two other first names Chanakya and Beauvoir. Napoleon O'Toole, Peckenpaw, Anthony St. Clair Peyrefitte Hunter, Jocasta, Florence Nightingale, Mlle. de Sade, Kamala Sutra, Media, Liv, Dolores ('the sad one'), Grimus (an anagram from Simurg), Gorf (an anagram from 'frog'), Dota (an anagram from 'toad'), Sispy (which seems a diminutive of Sisyphus), Stone, the character

5. contd...

"Logically the problem of individual identity is closely related to the epistemological status of proper names: for in the words of Hobbes, "Proper names bring to mind one thing only; universals recall any one of many". Proper names have exactly the same function in social life; they are the verbal expression of the particular identity of each individual person...

Characters in previous forms of literature, of course, were usually given proper names; but the kind of names actually used showed that the author was not trying to establish his characters as completely individualised entities. The precepts of classical and renaissance criticism agreed with the practice of their literature in preferring the historical names or type names. In either case, the names set the characters in the context of a large body of expectations."

(p.106)

whose only occupation and obsession is counting stones, Elfrida (the first half of her name 'elf' is particularly apt), Bird-Dog who is like a faithful dog of Grimus the 'bird' man, and Flapping Eagle - flapping and uncertain yet powerful and deadly. Flapping Eagle in his seven hundred and seventy seven years of existence changed his name several times:

"Several times he changed the name he gave to people... the change of name was necessary, if his immortality was not to be noticed."

(p.33)

The choice of proper names with strong literary or historical connotations is in keeping with the allegorical nature of the novel. The characters, though individualized to a certain extent are types rather than portrayals of individuals. Hence such names help to characterize with the utmost economy of narration.

In an interview, Salman Rushdie, talking about the effect of his cultural displacement on his writing says:

"If you arrive in a society as a migrant, your position is automatically a dislocated one, and so you have to work

out a literary mode which can allow that kind of conflict of description to take place in it." 6

The 'conflict of descriptions' that Rushdie is referring to is the discrepancy between the author's and reader's concepts of reality. It seems Grimus is just the sort of 'literary mode' that Rushdie has in mind. Towards the end of the novel, Flapping Eagle confronted with Grimus, finds that 'a number of things fell into place. An old, old memory stirred: the memory of a man searching for a voice in which to speak. Flapping Eagle, in the company of the orchestrator of his life had finally found such a voice for himself.' (p.252) For a first novel, it is very creditable - Grimus has made that 'voice' famous.

6. Interview with Kumkum Sangari, The Book Review, March-April, 1984. p.251)

Chapter IV

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF GRIMUS

"...we are obsessed with correspondences. Similarities between this and that, between apparently unconnected things, make us clap our hands delightedly when we find them out. It is a sort of national longing for form--or perhaps simply an expression of our deep belief that forms lie hidden within reality; that meaning reveals itself only in flashes."

(Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children)

"Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck,
And yet methinks, I have astronomy."

(William Shakespeare, Sonnet XIV)

"-Language, he mused, language makes concepts. Concepts make chains. I am bound, Dotty, bound and I don't know where."

(Grimus, p.14)

Leo Spitzer once confessed:

"How often, with all the theoretical experience or method accumulated in me over the years, have I stared blankly, quite similar to one of my beginning students, at a page that would not yield its magic. The only way out of this state of unproductivity is to read and re-read." 1

When confronted with Grimus the reader is as much at a loss to explain the resources of language by Rushdie which contribute more than anything else to the 'magical' appeal of Grimus, to its spell-binding quality. A writer's technique is immediately and ultimately, a craft in language. Whatever he/she does in his/her capacity as a novelist, he does in, and through, language. Any attempt to elucidate the text of Grimus would be incomplete - impossible, in fact - without an investigation of the role that language plays in the conceptualization and communication of meaning.

1. Leo Spitzer, Linguistics and Literary History (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1948), p.27.

In my analysis I have adopted a 'via media' approach to stylistic analysis making use of techniques of analysis suggested by Leo Spitzer,² Stephen Ullman³ and Roger Fowler⁴ and adopting a 'macro' stylistic approach. My choice of an eclectic approach is not entirely arbitrary. A novel like Grimus which has received little, if any critical attention, needs to be viewed from all possible angles before any one of them is seen to be especially suited. But in adopting the 'via media' stance I am not ignoring the valuable contribution made to stylistics by Structuralism⁵ and Post-Structuralism⁶. Where the 'micro' stylistic approach of structuralist analysis yields useful insights into the workings of language, I have incorporated these in my method of analysis. Michel Foucault's stress on the need for separating the various functions

-
2. L. Spitzer, Linguistics and Literary History, 1948.
 3. Stephen Ullman, Meaning and Style (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).
 4. Roger Fowler, Linguistics and the Novel (London and New York: Methuen, rpt. 1983).
 5. Notably Jonathan Culler's Structuralist Poetics (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).
 6. I have in mind a useful Post-Structuralist reader Untying the Text (ed.) Robert Young. (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

of the author and the consequent emergence of a simultaneously existent language which 'speaks' to the reader at the same time as the more easily identified 'voice' of the narrative, is a very significant stress which one cannot afford to disregard:

"Next to himself, (the Author) he discovers the existence of another language that also speaks and that he is unable to dominate, one that strives, fails, and falls silent and that he cannot manipulate, the language he spoke at one time and that has now separated itself from him, now gravitating in a space increasingly silent." 7

Explaining the implications of language-specific concepts, Rushdie more or less paraphrases the Whorfian hypothesis in Shame:

"To unlock a society look at its untranslatable words. Takallouf is a member of that opaque, world-wide set of concepts which refuse to travel across linguistic frontiers: it refers to a form of tongue-tying formality, a social restraint so extreme as to make it impossible for the victim to express what he or she really means, a species of compulsory irony which insists, for the sake of good form, on being taken literally."

(Shame, p.104)

-
7. Michel Foucault, "Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews", Edited and translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.41-2.

In a footnote which attempts to give a phonetic description of the Arabic letter K, Rushdie shows a similarly intelligent awareness of linguistics:

"I should note that the Arabic letter in question has no exact parallel in the Roman alphabet. It is more usually rendered as Q (Qaf)- but it is, in fact, a glottal-stop for which there is no accurate rendering. I have chosen to refer to it as K (Kaf) and risk confusion with the quite distinct letter Kaf..."

(Grimus, p.223)

For a writer so well-informed about basic concepts of linguistics it is not surprising that his prose style should have so much of the spontaneity of 'everyday language', and yet be able to convey the 'idiolects' of highly individualized characters with such convincing verisimilitude. What is surprising, however, is that the total impression one gets of his style is not of a hotch-potch - considering the fact that there is an assimilation of such a variety of styles - but of a distinctly individual, custom-made style of writing which is the Rushdie trademark. Explaining this 'mixture of styles' with reference to Midnight's Children, Rushdie gives an interesting analogy with techniques used in Mughal miniature painting:

"-the Mughal miniature for instance. The Humsa Nama which is one of the great art attempts in the history of the world, really: where the painters were brought from all over India and seven or eight painters worked on a single picture.

There is a mixture of styles and yet the completed painting looks like a single piece of work not a hotch-potch. It shows that the basis of Indian art is pluralistic and has to do with the combining of many different ways of looking.. And if you select any one of those ways of looking, you make a false picture. That influenced me." 8

If one can make generalizations about Rushdie's style - knowing fully well the limitations of these as of all generalisations - it is that his style of writing combines a variety of styles - consciously - and yet there is no discordant note, no false strain, no appearance of writing under false pretences as it were, no evident striving after effect, no self-conscious desire to write impressively. One explanation for this could be Rushdie's characteristic outspokenness which carries over into his writing. Bhabani Bhattacharya has accurately diagnosed the cause of affectation in writing:

8. "Writing in the Oral Tradition", Interview with Shanta Gokhale, Express Magazine, New Delhi, March 4, 1984.

"The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting ink."

(Bhabani Bhattacharya, Dream in Hawaii, p.126)

Another, less obvious explanation, is that, as Bonamy Dobree has put it "to write naturally as the mind would wish to utter, is just as much an art - or an artifice - as to write in what we call an artificial style! It is a tribute to Rushdie's art and artifice that his writing always seems so spontaneous and yet so inspired."⁹

Before attempting a more detailed analysis of the language of the text, it would be rewarding to isolate instances of different 'registers'.¹⁰

At one extreme there is the formal, pedagogic language of the philosopher Ignatius Gribb:

9. Bonamy Dobree, Modern Prose Style (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.50.

10. a term used for language-variation of a non-dialectal e.g. differences between polite and familiar language, spoken and written language, legal language, scientific language, etc.)

"-The crucial distinction to draw, he said, is between obsession and possession. The possessed man is out of control of himself; it is a form of insanity. Possession leads to tyrannies and vile crimes. Obsession leads to the reverse. It composes symphonies and creates paintings. It writes novels and moves mountains. It is the supreme gift of the human race. To deny it is to deny our humanity. What purpose is there in immortality if it is not to be used to explore in depth one's deepest preoccupation? What purpose is there in Calf Island?"

(p.171)

One is struck by the quick succession of short simple sentences, and equally short co-ordinated simple sentences. They are assertive and the use of the 'historic' present gives them an air of universal truths. There is, appropriately, a climax created by the two rhetorical questions which end the passage the latter question being a shorter version of the preceding one.

Similarly, formal, but more pedantic and tautologous is the school-masterly register of Virgil Jones:

"-O my sincere apologies, said Virgil Jones, if it seems I was ducking your inquiry. Far from it, sir, far from it. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to elucidate the

matter of the frock. The fact of the matter is, one's conversational partners have been rather limited of late and the opportunity is well-nigh irresistible. The affair of the frock is a trifle. Merely that when we fished you from the sea, your garments were a little moist, not to say damp, not to say positively sodden. And the fact of the matter is, my own wardrobe is somewhat limited; so on the whole we thought it best, if you take my meanings to employ one of Mrs. O'Toole's garments. You have our unreserved apologies if it brings you any embarrassment, but I assure all proper decencies were observed. Mrs. O'Toole leaving the room during the process of disinvestiture."

(p.39)

Of the total eight sentences, only one is a simple sentence. The other seven sentences are not only complex but also fairly long - an average of twenty words per sentence. The style is reminiscent of Dickens' Mr. Pickwick - much irrelevant detail, exaggerated importance given to 'trifles' the numerous digressions and the use of high flown words in a context where, instead of sounding impressive, they sound ridiculous e.g. 'conversational partners', 'elucidate', 'employ', 'disinvestiture'. It is a good example of registers which is often rather comic. For instance, the 'fished' and 'sodden' stand out as obtrusively

colloquial against the background of more sophisticated vocabulary. The register of logic and philosophy is used to expose the flimsy basis of the doctrines of the Gorfs:

"The minor branch was called Conceptualism. It is perhaps best defined in one of the rare statements of the Dota: 'I think therefore it is.' It was our Gorf who first saw the tremendous implications of this statement. Dota had intended it to mean simply that nothing could exist without the presence of a cognitive intellect to perceive its existence: our Gorf reversed this to postulate that anything of which such an intellect could conceive must therefore exist. He followed this by conceiving the possibility of other Endimions...containing accessible life-forms."

(p.70)

The numerous verbs of inert perception and cognition together with the balanced antithesis of the sentence "Dota had... therefore exist" highlights the glib, facile logic of the speaker and of the register in general.

A less formal, more intimate variety of speech is the following outburst:

"-Very well, he said, I don't really know why I came here at all. From a sense of friendship, I suppose, a sense of obligation, and, I admit it, of guilt. I had also thought you could help me... I wanted to ask you things, to ask your guidance... I see now there's no point in any of that. Don't you find it sad, Virgil, that you, of all people, should have sunk so low? You, who told me how you valued your dignity. 'One tries by one's life and actions to bring a little sense into an inane universe'... is this what you meant... this ... this rag-bag of lascivious impotence?... I wanted to ask you why, a dozen times, but I waited until you were ready. Now it seems I've missed my chance. You are ruined and I'm settled. You're more than ruined... you're being embalmed, here."

(p.168)

The free use of common idiomatic expressions - 'very well', 'at all', 'I suppose', 'there's no point', 'any of that', 'you of all people' - gives the passage a spontaneity and naturalness. But the suppressed anger is conveyed through the 'propriety' of the syntax. Apart from some hesitation, there is no breakdown of syntax and the sentences are well constructed, observing both the principles of end-focus and climax.

A lesser extent of self-control is reflected in the looser syntactic structure of this outburst.

"-Excuse you indeed! yelled O'Toole. O you're a fine fool all right, Mr Virgil Casanova. Saints spare me if I don't strangle you here and now, choke you slowly to your well-deserved death. To come into the house of O'Toole himself and accuse him of being a cuckold, 'tis the true folly of the madman you are. Seduce my wife! Lucky you are I don't believe you. You couldn't seduce a sausage, which saves your life."

(p.127)

The inversion of the normal order of a sentence by placing the subject at the end in the second sentence brings out the sarcasm forcefully. The inversion of most of the sentences, with the main clause coming towards the end reflects the on-the-spur-of-the-moment nature of the sentences. They are not carefully pre-planned and so the thoughts that are uppermost in the mind of the speaker come first in the sentence, even if they are subordinate clauses. This gives the language a true-to-life consistency.

Excitement of a different sort partly accounts for the stacatto effect of the following extract:

"-Twice, bellowed One-Track Peckenpaw, drowning his audience's voice. Yeah. Anyway. It was a pleasure to track him. Like being on the heels of a wilful woman needing taming. I'd think how a woman would behave when I saw his footprint near a stream. Was it bluff or a double bluff? Which way was he really going? I've always trusted to instinct. You get a feel of your quarry stronger than any scent. If the signs don't add up with the feel you ignore the signs. That's the difference between a lousy tracker and a great one."

(p.116)

There is a Joycean stream-of-consciousness attempt to adapt syntax to represent the supposed flow of thought in the character's subconscious:

"Once. Then Ago. Before. The terror of the titties, I. They came easily into my hands. They came. Easily. Gently does it... Then Birds... Then. Before. Ah, a bird-fancier, I, no fancier bird than I. ...Once. Then. Ago ...Odd... I was there where the pill was, my skill was, where the coil, my toil, and they came. Easily. In my hand. Once. Then. Ago. Before. Liv. ...Guilt. My fault. Mea Maxima. Sorry I spoke. Sorry I moved. Sorry I lived. Sorry. On my knees. Forgive me. Liv."

(p.101)

The same character Virgil Jones, regaining consciousness after a life-and-death struggle speaks in a more direct, clipped style:

"-Shouldn't have bothered, he said. No contest really. Not a hope. Flea trying to rape an elephant. Couldn't order him back. Not in a million years. It's his game."

The visual strangeness of the text in certain places highlights the strange appearance of a character more effectively than mere description could:

"Mr. Norbert Page was a small man.

He wore small silver-rimmed bifocals.

He took small steps.

He drank small drinks."

(p.121)

The incantatory effect of the following is stressed by the repetition of 'And' at the beginning of each sentence and the visual representation in the text:

"And Livia Cramm had said the same.

And Virgil Jones had named him Destroyer.

And yet he wanted none of it.

So who did?

And who or what was Grimus?
And the Stone Rose?"

(p.62)

The conflicting thoughts that perturb Virgil Jones are dealt with systematically by snapping a twig when each argument and counter-argument is neutralised. The text displays this process as well as describe it:

This is how he persuaded himself:

Nicholas Deggle could not have known that Flapping Eagle would meet old Virgil.

Snap.

Ergo, he could have sent the Axona... to see if the gate he had built would hold.

Snap.

Which meant he intended to follow.

Snap.

If Nicholas Deggle... was expelled from the island.

Snap.

If he did not return... at any rate.

Snap.

But Nicholas Deggle... would in all probability do.

Snap.

Still there was little merit left in staying put.

Snap.

Except for Dollores, of course:
she... so for Dollores sake.

Snap.

Then again... assume that she
could.

Snap.

A crucial question... to hope
for the best.

Snap.

Another crucial question...
on the mountain.

Snap.

And yet... not at all slowly.

Snap.

(p.63-4)

Suspense can also be heightened through
visual representation:

"The piece of knowledge was this:
No-one ever came to Calf Island by accident.
The mountain drew its own kind to itself.
Or perhaps it was Grimus who did that."

(p.15)

But it is not merely visual experimentation
and typographical gimmickry which communicate over
and above the words themselves. Refrains of songs,
poems and literary allusions give the language of

Grimus not only a richness of texture but also an exotic appeal:

"Whitebeard is all my love and
whitebeard is my desire

.....

Early one morning.

Just as the sun was burning

I a maiden crying in the valley below..."

(p.14)

"Drink this, Virgil. Water from
the stream.

Eat this, Virgil, berries from the
tree.

Rest now, Virgil, don't talk,
rest. Sleep. It heals."

(p.101)

"And shall ye attempt to climb
The inaccessible mountain of Kaf?
It bruises all men in its time
It shatters the strongest staff
It brings an end to all rhyme
And crushes the lightest laugh
O do not attempt then to climb
The inaccessible mountain of Kaf.
In time all must climb it, in time."

(p.140)

"Elfrida Edge
 Under the hedge
 Plays with herself
 Or plays with Reg."

(p.181)

These refrains are somewhat similar in effect to the Chorus in Greek tragedy, though of course much less effectual:

"Frida Gribb
 Killed her hubby
 That's no fib."

(p.188)

Descriptive passages in Grimus are some of the finest specimens of Rushdie's language:

"The sea felt pure beneath them, its spray salting their cheeks, stinging, refreshing; a sea of mists and clouds, grey curling waves hidden behind veils; a sea to be lost on, a drifting, unchanged sea."

(p.85)

At the phonological level the repetition of the /s/ sound suggests the sound of the spray and the waves:

'sea', 'spray', 'salting', 'cheeks',
 'stinging', 'sea', 'mists', 'clouds',
 'waves', 'veils', 'sea', 'lost', 'sea'

The 'loose' sentence structure of the sentence with its initial main clause and its trailing, subordinate noun clause and its paratactic clauses in the final position give the sentence a 'refreshing' directness and naturalness which would not have been the case had the sentence structure been periodic. The parataxis whereby the two non-finite clauses both beginning with 'a sea' are juxtaposed heightens the sense of the vastness of the sea. It is also suggestive of the movement of the waves - one wave followed by another - just as one clause is followed by another. The sensory verb 'felt' gives a tangible quality to the spray and the use of three '-ing' forms in close proximity - 'salting', 'stinging', 'refreshing' with the 'close' front high vowel /i/ convey the sharpness of the spray hitting their cheeks; 'salting' is used as a present participle but 'stinging' and 'refreshing' are adjectives qualifying 'spray'. However, they can possibly be interpreted as present participles also. Their strategic final position gives them greater emphasis while the continuity inherent in the '-ing' participle dramatizes the

continuity of the waves. The use of 'curling' and 'drifting' in the two, trailing, non -finite clauses has a similar anaphoric effect. This extract highlights the feature of Rushdie's language which is stylistically prominent - his use of two adjectives to qualify one noun thus intensifying the description - 'grey curling waves'; 'drifting, unchanged sea'.

The opening lines of Chapter Thirty-one is a fine example of verbal 'imagism'. To stress the fact that the sentences are purely descriptive and non-assertive, the author has not used any finite verb:

"K by night: houses huddling together as though clustered for protection, drawing warmth from each other. Rough exteriors, stained by damp and mist and time, dirty white-wash crudities, architectural cripples, surviving defiantly for all their crooked tiles and ill-fitting doors."

(p.110)

The opening words 'K by night' with the verb 'is' omitted and the object-complement 'K' existing independent of the 'this is' which would have preceded it in a 'normal' sentence, make the opening words more dramatic. Here again the present '-ing' participle occurs three times but it alternates with the

past, '-ed' participle:

'huddling' 'clustered' 'drawing' 'stained'
 'surviving' 'ill-fitting'

The use of present participles derived from dynamic verbs (huddle, cluster, draw) with inanimate noun 'houses' gives the houses a personality of their own. In the next sentence abstract, non-count nouns 'damp' 'mist' 'time' are the agents of a dynamic verb 'stain' thus giving them human attributes. This is keeping with Rushdie's over all strategy of imbuing nature with potent, destructive qualities. The mists which continuously envelop the mountain and give it its mysterious, sinister quality are mentioned frequently in the text. The use of the adverb 'defiantly' relating to 'cripples' has a forcefulness which is due to its unexpected occurrence, defiance being hardly a quality one would expect of a cripple. Rushdie breathes life into inanimate objects and processes. Through his use of words from different semantic fields, he gives the prose an unexpected vitality and freshness which keeps the reader constantly responsive to the text. The lines which immediately follow the passage quoted above illustrate the devices used in the above passage, of transforming lifeless description into a vivid,

dynamic one. The last sentence has a finite verb and it has the effect of signalling the end of the 'description-from-afar' and bringing the reader into the scene:

"Around the houses, the streets.
Lifelines of dust, eddying
swirling among the deformed homes,
coming from nowhere, circling
aimlessly, existence their only
purpose. A place must have
streets; blank spaces between
the filled-up holes.

(p.110)

Apart from their pictorial vividness the use of the noun phrases 'coming from nowhere', 'circling aimlessly', 'existence itself their only purpose' gives the streets precisely those qualities which the reader observes in the hero - his rootlessness, his wander-lust, his apathetic existence. The words could very easily be describing the traveller as well as the streets. Actually this description of the town is a build-up for the introduction of the enigmatic character Stone in the following paragraph:

"A man, decrepit as his clothes,
stained as the houses, dusty as
the streets, on all fours,
crawling the length of this
majestic thoroughfare, a pil-
grim on the road to Rome,
engaged for all appearance in
an act of worship."

(p.110)

'decrepit' echoes 'architectural cripples' while 'stained' and 'dusty' are adjectives which have, a few sentences earlier, been used to describe the houses and the streets. In this way Rushdie emphasises the sub-human character of Stone while raising the status of the streets by the comparison implicit with 'the road to Rome'.

The narrative prose does not merely propel the story. It, as much as the purely descriptive passages, contributes to the evocation of 'atmosphere'.

"Sitting in this slum of a room, his hopes of redemption shattered by the mumbling failure outside, reduced to the status of a pawn in someone else's game by the truth from this hooded oracle, Flapping Eagle learnt the story of Calf Mountain; learnt it when he believed there was no longer anything he could do about it. As usual, he was wrong about that."

(p.220)

The suspense is heightened by the three anticipatory clauses which precede the main clause 'Flapping Eagle... Mountain.' The sentence works up to a climax which is dramatic. After this long (fifty seven words) sentence there is a short, simple sentence which makes a dramatic announcement - 'As usual, he was wrong about that.'

Rushdie usually puts the 'punch line' in a short sentence which comes at the end of a paragraph or a larger unit such as a section or a chapter. Here are some examples:

"She knew the book by heart."

"There's friendship if you like."

"You must not disbelieve."

(p.220)

"I shall begin."

"It was here that I found the Thing."

(p.221)

"I killed him."

(p.188)

Flapping Eagle, politely agreeing with Virgil Jones' explanation says at one point - "Quite so, he said, and noticed in himself, not for the first time, a tendency to adopt the speaking style and speech patterns of others." It is Rushdie's extraordinary sensitivity to the 'speaking style and speech patterns of others' which gives the monologues and dialogues in Grimus their authenticity. Characters reveal their personalities not only by what they say but also by what they do not say. Flapping Eagle's extraordinary passivity is reinforced not so much by his responses but through his non-response

in a situation where the reader would have expected a more positive reaction. After Virgil Jones has successfully rescued Flapping Eagle from the near-fatal clutches of the Inner and Outer Dimensions, during which process Virgil was lucky to have survived, all Flapping Eagle says is 'thank you'. One would have expected some more emotional reaction:

"Something had gone out of Virgil Jones' face. His defeat had drained him of a great deal more than energy. He seemed to Flapping Eagle now as he had first seemed: shambling, bumbling, ineffectual. The decisive figure of the Inner Dimensions had gone, nursed once more behind a skin of failure.

-Virgil, said Flapping Eagle.
Virgil. "Thank you."

(p.100)

But when necessary, characters speak more than usual too. Bird-Dog who is normally not very voluble gets carried away in her account of her meeting with Sispy the pedlar:

"Bird-Dog he whispered and the sound sounded so harsh on his lips because he spoke so softly and sighing like the breeze in a whisper it was, his voice the whole world in a whisper such a spell it was."

(p.20)

Apart from the Joycean stream-of-consciousness language in this passage it is the almost poetic quality of the prose which attracts the reader's attention. The quick succession of sibilants expresses the sound of the whisper - 'sighing like the breeze'.

Sometimes the description can be vivid as well as lurid:

"With exaggerated care, she drew a red line with the knife, a thin, leaking red mouth, grinning bloodily from ear to ear, beneath her chin.

Bird-Dog watched it drip."

(p.226)

Rushdie handles the language with ease and confidence. He uses unfamiliar collocations of words but not with the express purpose of jolting the reader or merely for the sake of originality per se. The freshness of the idiom, the imaginative use of adjectives and the variations in sentence structure all this and much more besides - which can perhaps be analysed but which can never be fully accounted for - go to make up a language which is responsive to every mood of the narrative, the characters and the 'implied author'.

Much of the power of the language comes from the authenticity of the 'speaking voice'. The author's intense involvement with the hero's predicament - which can be seen as Rushdie's own - gives the narrative language cogency and cohesiveness. Rushdie is also unusually sensitive to the meaning and significance of words in their original sense. This makes him more alert to the debasement of over-used words and he tries to restore the original meaning of the words and so give them a longer lease of life and a vitality which is refreshing:

"-No, no no, no, no, expostulated Gribb. You miss the point entirely. The crux is this: the word importance means 'having import'. That is to say having meaning. Now Elfrida, who believes tales to be important things, says she would prefer them to be less full of meaning that is less important. Whereas the Countess..... likes them to be... importful selections or important. A simple matter of semantics you follow."

(p.150)

An analysis of Rushdie's language is very rewarding. It heightens our aesthetic appreciation of the novel and the craft of the novelist. In support,

one can quote the linguist-critic Leo Spitzer who also maintains that:

"To formulate observation by means of words is not to cause the artistic beauty to evaporate in vain intellectualities; rather, it makes for a widening and deepening of the aesthetic taste. It is only a frivolous love that cannot survive intellectual definition; great love prospers with understanding."¹¹

11. Leo Spitzer, quoted in Style in Fiction, Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, (London and New York: Longman, 1981), p.2. Source of quotation unknown.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

"Everything has shape if you look for it. There is no escape from form."

(Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children)

"A single word, changing the course of history."

(Grimus, p.185)

"You must understand that I have been rootless for a long time now..."

(Grimus, p.151)

"My old mother always told me, you've got to trick people into accepting new ideas."

(Grimus, p.259)

"For a man at the end of a quest, Flapping Eagle felt extremely unheroic."

(Grimus, p.241).

"To read", says Jonathan Culler, "is always to read in relation to other texts, in relation to the codes that are the products of these texts and go to make up the culture."¹

When one tries to make any sort of assessment of Salman Rushdie's achievement, the question which keeps nagging the mind, no matter how much one tries to ignore it, is 'Which tradition does Rushdie belong to?'. Whether Rushdie is an Indo-Pakistani writer writing in English or a British writer writing about India and Pakistan could perhaps only be decided, as the two 'Abyssinians' Khallit and Mallit in Grimus resolve all disputes, by tossing a coin. Like their disputes this question is 'an eternal argument without beginning or end' and equally futile. No writer lives or writes in a vacuum and even when he breaks away from a tradition it is always, inescapably, the background

1. Jonathan Culler, The Pursuit of Signs (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.12.

against which he writes. I have not attempted to identify the background for various reasons. I do not wish to enter any controversy. Moreover, it does not materially affect one's appreciation of Rushdie's novels even if the question of the literary background of these novels remains unanswered. The fact remains that he is claimed by both traditions. Writing about Rushdie's successful portrayal, in Shame, of 'what is prohibited as fact can flourish as fiction', Nicholas Shrimpton in a review in The Sunday Times, has this to say:

"Salman Rushdie is the latest and most radical of the English writers who have responded to this challenge" (the challenge of the novel 'to confront history')²

An equally convincing case could be made for either side - Rushdie can be placed in both the traditions, the tradition of the English novel and the tradition of the Indian novel in English. This does not detract from his achievement in any way. Rather it is a tribute to the breadth of his vision that he can so readily fit into either tradition. Rushdie's hero in Grimus has a similar ability to adapt himself to his environment:

2. Nicholas Shrimpton, The Sunday Times (London, Sept. 11, 1983), p.47.

"Among carnivores, he praised the strength-giving virtues of animal flesh; among vegetarians he spoke of the spiritual purity that abstinence from such flesh brought; among cannibals he devoured a companion."

(p.33)

V.S. Naipaul, who shares with Rushdie a certain cultural alienation from the land of his birth and who has often faced similar questions of tradition and heritage has sidestepped the issue very neatly, and what he says about himself could apply, without much distortion of facts, to Rushdie as well:

"Every writer is, in the long run, on his own; but it helps, in the most practical way, to have a tradition. The English language was mine; the tradition was not." 3

In the final analysis, his predecessors, the tradition to which he belongs, even his political affiliations are not as important as the individual works, which must stand on their own merits. Their chances are excellent because Rushdie has a high degree of confidence in his perceptions of the world,

3. V.S. Naipaul, "Words on Their Own", The Times Literary Supplement (London: June 4, 1964), p.472.

and yet this confidence is tempered by an equally high degree of severe self-criticism:

"And after a while, he realized he had learnt nothing at all. The many, many experiences, the multitude of people and the myriad crimes had left him empty; a grin without a face."

(Grimus, p.33)

By putting his finger on elusive contemporary problems, re-creating them within recognizable characters, he gives immediately and comprehensible form to a reality which is otherwise too complex and expansive to grasp. This is no small achievement. Its magnitude is witnessed by the growing seriousness with which his work is being received by critics throughout the English-speaking world.

Rushdie is very much conscious of his peculiar position in relation to questions of his heritage:

"It's like walking on thin ice - you have to make sure it takes your weight at every step. I have the sense of building the road step by step, as I proceed, and in that sense, I don't have a place to write from." 4

4. The Book Review, Interview with Kumkum Sangari, New Delhi, March-April 1984, pp.251-2.

Like his hero, Flapping Eagle, Rushdie is a man in search of a voice - a suitable voice - to speak in. The alternatives available are many:

"A man rehearsing voices on a cliff top: high whining voices, low gravelly voices, subtle insinuating voices, raucous strident voices, voices honeyed with pain, voices glinting with laughter, the voices of the birds and of the fishes... and each word was the word of a different being:- I am looking for a suitable voice to speak in."

(Grimus, p.32)

Like Flapping Eagle, again, he has 'found such a voice':

"An old, old memory stirred: the memory of a man searching for a voice in which to speak. Flapping Eagle, ...had finally found such a voice for himself."

(p.252)

And this 'voice', will, one feels, continue to speak for generations to come when the novels, detached from their contemporary setting, will be seen in better perspective and will be judged on their intrinsic merits. Making due allowances for the fact that (as T.S. Eliot has put it) "No generation is interested in Art in quite the same way as any other; each

generation like each individual, brings to the contemplation of art its own categories of appreciation, makes its own demands upon art and has its own uses for art" one can confidently predict that Rushdie's reputation and the appreciation of his works will not diminish with time, when the contemporary themes of his novels lose some of their topical interest.⁵

This raises the related question of the future of what George Orwell termed 'English-language Indian literature'. George Orwell, writing way back in 1942 was very pessimistic about the future of 'English-language Indian literature'. In a review of Mulk Raj Anand's The Sword and the Sickle, he writes:

"At present, English is to a great extent, the official language of India: five million Indians are literate in it; there is a huge English-language Indian press and the only English magazine devoted wholly to poetry is edited by Indians. On average, too, Indians write and even pronounce English far better than any European race. Will this state of affairs continue?"

5. T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p.105, quoted in The Theory of Reading (ed.) Frank Gloversmith (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), p.226.

Orwell felt that it was unlikely that the status quo as regards the position of English would continue when 'the economic inducements for learning English' disappear after 'the present relationship between the two countries... vanishes'. Orwell, of course, underestimated the 'prestige' value of the English language in a country which was, a few years after Orwell wrote the review, to throw out the British rulers but firmly refuse to chuck out their language. Orwell would have been surprised to find that instead of diminishing in importance, English would 'rule the waves' much more extensively than Britannia ever could. His pessimism is forgivable. Few Englishmen, or even Indians, could have visualised the present position of English in India at the time Orwell was writing:

"Presumably, therefore, the fate of the English language in Asia is either to fade out or to survive as a pidgin language useful for business and technical purposes. It might survive in a dialect form as the mother tongue of the small Eurasian community, but it is difficult to believe that it has a literary future."

While conceding that Mulk Raj Anand was 'much better than the average run of English novelists' he did not think Anand was 'likely to have many successors'. But if Orwell's prognostications were to be disproved

as far as the future of English in India was concerned, he correctly realised that the reasons for the fact that Anand's books 'have at this moment an importance that goes far beyond their literary merit' was 'partly because they are interpreting Asia to the West, but more... because they act as a westernising influence among their own countrymen. And at present there are reasons why the second function is more important than the first.'⁶

Had Orwell lived to read some of the 'literary' Indian English of today he would have felt justified in his prediction that English could only survive as 'a pidgin language useful for business and technical purposes'. It is not that Indians are not proficient in the written variety of English - rather it is the written variety which Indians can handle with greater fluency than the spoken variety - but as David McCutcheon has said, "English as a medium of expression works as a barrier against real insight into the Indian mind and circumstances".⁷

-
6. George Orwell, A Review of The Sword and the Sickle by Mulk Raj Anand in The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell (eds.), Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), pp.216-218.
7. David McCutcheon, Indian Writing in English (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop, 1969), p.11.

This is where the novels of Salman Rushdie could prove to be not merely entertaining but also instructive. The language of his novels is worth studying as a model of good written English in a variety of registers. George Orwell in Politics and the English Language has said that 'if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought'. How much more harm, then can a corrupted version of a language cause?

But perhaps Rushdie's reaction to such proposals might well be that of Irina Cherkassov in Grimus:

"You put too much store by my tale. It's only a tale, after all. Tales are really very unimportant things. So why should they not bring us a little innocent pleasure...?"

(p.150)

And for those, like me, who try to see too much in each 'piece' of the novel - which is like Virgil Jones' jigsaw puzzle:

"-You do jigsaw puzzles, then.

-Do them? Mr. Eagle I construct them... At the moment my skill in construction far surpasses my talents at reconstruction..."

"-This last piece, said Flapping Eagle, doesn't fit. Virgil Jones smiled in satisfaction. -That's my little joke, he said. The jigsaw cannot be completed."

(p.40, 42)

In conclusion, one can quote Nicholas Shrimpton's verdict on Shame, which could apply little exaggeration to Grimus as well:

"While summary can go some way towards the political argument of Shame it cannot touch its wit, its verbal play or its imaginative dexterity. This is a major work by a developing talent. It is also one of the best and most exciting novels of the year." 8

8. Nicholas Shrimpton, op.cit., p.47.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Walter; Tradition and Dream: The English and American Novel from the Twenties to Our Time (London: Phoenix House, rpt. 1968).
- _____ Reading a Novel (London: Dent, 1969).
- Allot, Miriam; Novelists on the Novel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959).
- Amur, G.S., Manohar Malgonkar (New Delhi: Heinemann, 1973).
- Anand, Mulk Raj; The Bubble (New Delhi: Heinemann, 1984).
- Bakhtin, Mikhail; The Word in the Novel, in Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook, vol.2 (ed.) E.S. Shaffer (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- Berger, Monroe; Real and Imagined Worlds: The Novel and Social Science (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).
- Bhattacharya, Bhabani; Dream in Hawaii (Delhi: Vision Books, 1983).
- Blake, N.F.; Non-standard Language in English Literature (London: Deutsch, 1981).

- Booth, Wayne C.; *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
- Bradbury, Malcolm; *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- Burgess, Anthony; *The Novel Now: A Student's Guide to Contemporary Fiction* (London: Faber, 1967).
- Butor, Michel; *Inventory*, translated and edited by Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).
- Chambers, Ross; *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- Chapman, Raymond; *Linguistics and literature* (London: Arnold, 1973).
- _____ ; *The Language of English Literature* (London: Arnold, 1982).
- _____ ; *The Treatment of Sounds in Language and Literature* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984).
- Chatman, Seymour (ed.); *Literary Style: A Symposium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Crook, Arthur; *British and Commonwealth Fiction Since 1950* (London: National Book League, 1966).

Culler, Jonathan; *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

_____ ; *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics Literature Deconstruction* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981).

Dobree, Bonamy; *Modern Prose Style* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

Ellis, J.M.; *The Theory of Literary Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

Fish, Stanley; *Is There a Text in this Class?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

Fleishman, Avrom; *The English Historical Novel: Sir Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1971).

_____ ; *Fiction and the Ways of Knowing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

- Fletcher, John; *Novel and Reader* (London and Boston: Marion Boyars, 1980).
- Friedman, Alan; *The Turn of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).
- Genette, Gerald; *Narrative Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).
- Gerber, Richard; *Utopian Fantasy: A Study of English Utopian Fiction since the end of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955).
- Gokhale, Shanta; "Writing in the Oral Tradition", interview with Salman Rushdie, *Express Magazine* (New Delhi, 4 March 1984).
- Goldknope, David; *The Life of the Novel* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972).
- Handy, William; "Toward a Formalist Criticism of Fiction", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, III (Spring 1961), 81-82 rpt. in *the Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism* (ed.) R.M. Davis (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969), 94-102.
- Hardy, Barbara; "Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An approach through Narrative", *Novel*, II:1 (Fall, 1968), 5-14.

- Harris, Wendell V; "Style and the Twentieth Century Novel" in *Critical Approach to Fiction* (eds.) Shiv K. Kumar and Keith F. McKean (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968).
- Hewitt, Douglas; *The Approach to Fiction: Good and bad readings of novels* (London: Longman, 1972).
- Iser, Wolfgang; *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).
- Jefferson, Ann; "Intertextuality and the poetics of fiction" in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, vol.2 (ed.) E.S. Shaffer (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- Jefferson, Douglas, and Martin, Graham (eds.); *The Uses of Fiction* (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1982).
- Jhabvala, Ruth Praver; "Moon-Light, Jasmine and Rickets" *The New York Times*, New York, April 22, 1975. p.35.
- Kermode, Frank, "Figures in the Carpet: On recent theories of narrative discourse", in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, vol.2 (ed.) E.S. Shaffer (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

- Kettle, Arnold; Introduction to the English Novel
(London: Hutchinson, 1967), vol.II.
- Korg, Jacob; Language in Modern Literature (Sussex:
The Harvester Press, 1979).
- Laing, Stuart; "Making and Breaking of the Novel
Tradition" in The Theory of Reading (ed.)
Frank Gloversmith (Sussex: The Harvester
Press, 1984).
- Leech, Geoffrey N. and Short, Michael H.; Style in
Fiction (London and New York: Longman, 1981).
- Lubbock, Percy; The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan
Cape, 1957).
- Lukacs, G.; The Historical Novel, translated by H.
and S. Mitchell (Penguin edition, 1977).
- Malgonkar, Manohar; Interview: The Times Literary
Supplement, London, June 4, 1964, p.491.
- McCutchion, David; Indian Writing in English (Calcutta:
Writers' Workshop, 1969).
- Miller, J. Hills; Fiction and Repetition (Oxford:
Blackwell, 1982).

Mukarovsky, Jan; "Standard Language and Poetic Language"
in D.C. Freeman, *Linguistics and Literary
Style* (Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 40-56.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi; *The Twice Born Fiction: Theme
and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English*
(New Delhi and London: Heinemann, 1971).

Orwell Sonia and Angus, Ian (eds.); *The Collected
Essays Journalism and Letters of George
Orwell, vol.II* (London: Secker and Warburg,
1968).

Page, Norman; *Speech in the English Novel* (London:
Longman, 1973).

Quirk, Randolph and Greenbaum, Sidney; *A University
Grammar of English* (Essex: Longman, rpt. 1982).

Riffaterre, Michael; "The Stylistic Approach to Litera-
ry History", in *New Directions in Literary
History* (ed.) Ralph Cohen (London: Routledge
and Kegan Paul, 1974).

Rockwell, Joan; *Fact in Fiction: The Use of Literature
in the Systematic Study of Society* (London:
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974).

Rushdie, Salman; *Grimus* (London: Granada, Panther
Books, 1977).

Rushdie, Salman; *Midnight's Children* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981).

_____ ; *Shame* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1983).

_____ ; Interview, *Herald*. Karachi, June 1983.
pp.29-32.

_____ ; Interview, *Gentleman*, Bombay, April 1984.
pp.64-73.

_____ ; "Whitewashing the Raj". *Gentleman*, Bombay,
May 1984.

Sangari, Kumkum; Interview with Salman Rushdie, *The Book Review*, New Delhi, March-April 1984,
pp.250-253.

Sanghvi, Malvika, "'Without Shame': an interview with Salman Rushdie", *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay, March 25, 1984. pp.20-22.

Scholes, Robert; "Language Narrative and Anti-Narrative", *Critical Enquiry*, 7,1 (Autumn, 1980), 204-212.

Shaw, Harry E.; *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and his Successors* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983).

Shrimpton, Nicholas; "A Review of Salman Rushdie's *Shame*". *The Sunday Times*, London, September 11, 1983, p.47.

Spitzer, Leo; Linguistics and Literary History
(Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1948).

Ulmann, Stephen; Language and Style (Oxford: Blackwell,
1964).

Wetherill, P.M.; The Literary Text: An Examination of
Critical Methods (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).

Young, Robert; Untying the Text (Boston, London and
Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

#####